Commentary

Volume Fifty-eight, Number Five, November 1974

In Defense of Monogamy

GEORGE GILDER

THE PROBLEM OF KENNETH CLARK
Hadley Arkes

BEGGAR MOON—A Story
Allen Hoffman

OF GRAVES AND POETS
Eleanor Clark

MOLIÈRE AND MAGIC
Jack Richardson

THE IMPORTANCE OF "DUDDY KRAVITZ"
William S. Pechter

BOOKS IN REVIEW: Edward Grossman / Peter Shaw
David Stern / James Hitchcock / Werner J. Dannhauser

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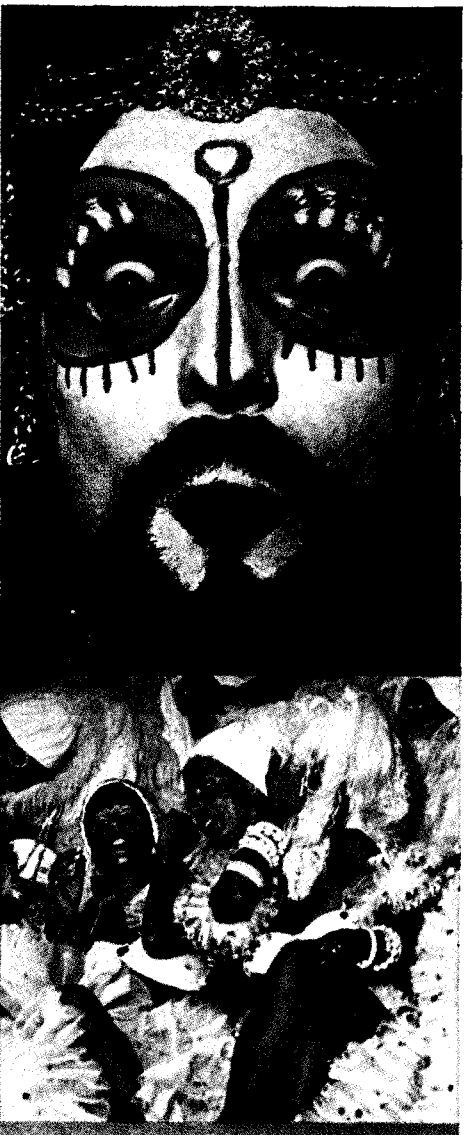

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Commentary

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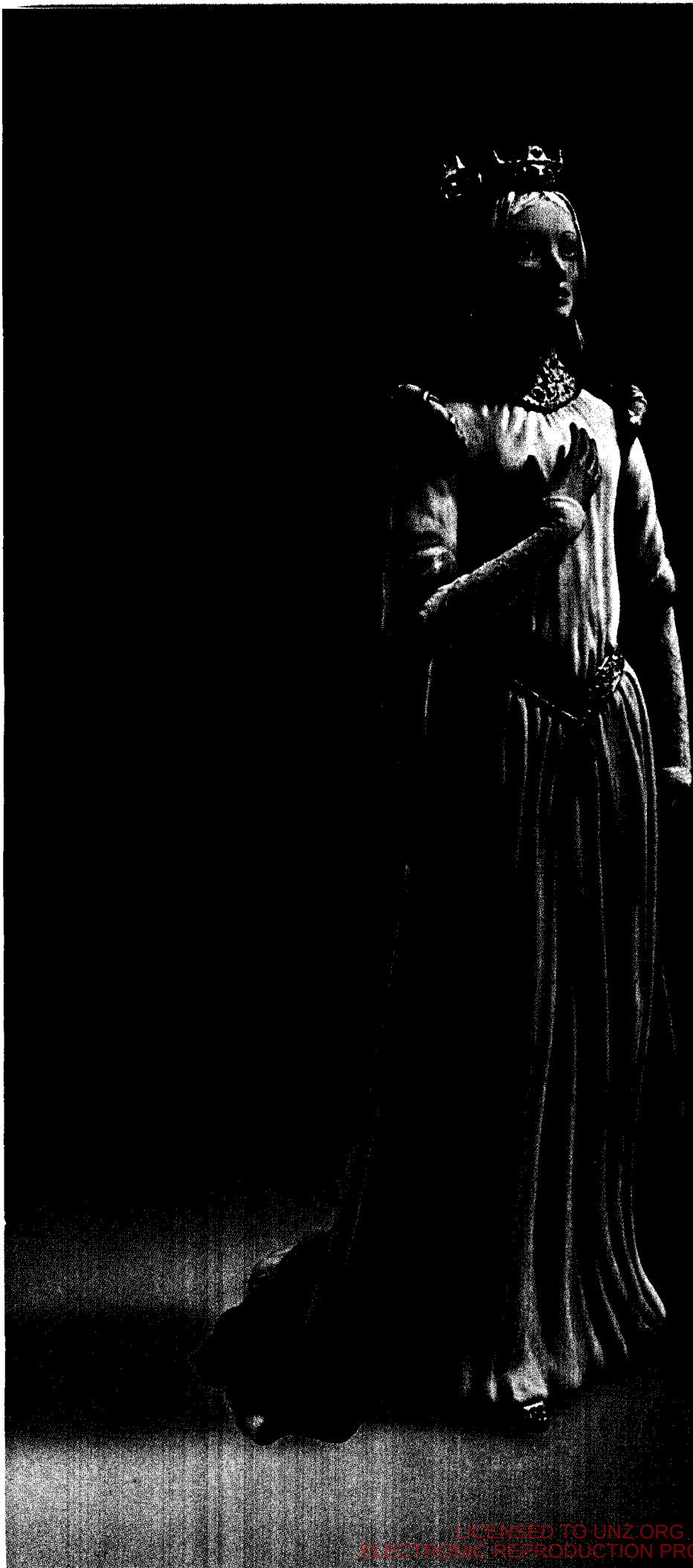

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Letters from Readers

Growth and Population

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

On the first page of his article ["Against the Neo-Malthusians," July], B. Bruce-Briggs refers to Réne Duclos of Rockefeller University. I'm quite sure that he is refering to René Dubos. Mr. Bruce-Briggs has succeeded in demolishing only his own straw man. I don't believe any of the individuals he has named share the beliefs he has attributed to all of us. Quite aside from this, perhaps he is unaware that the Malthusian prediction has already come true in many parts of the world. Man's numbers seem to be outstripping his wisdom and will continue to do so increasingly unless his institutions and his scientific and political capacities can adapt to the complexities of the modern world.

(DR.) JOHN H. KNOWLES
The Rockefeller Foundation
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In connection with "Against the Neo-Malthusians" let me say, first, that one of the besetting illusions in a materialistic society that has not yet wholly wrenched itself from the remnants of a moral tradition is that transcendental values may ultimately be realized through material means—more specifically, sustained economic growth. It is about as plausible as the belief that an enduring peace can be reached—on whatever pretext or ideology—by violent means. Absorption in material things leads only to further absorption in them. Thus, B. Bruce-Briggs's last sentence, "Only continued growth can begin to deliver, in modest degree, what the coming world will require by way of health, welfare, and human dignity," cannot be true. Indeed, a quarter of a century of rapid economic growth in the West has done little for our health, other than the discovery of new remedies for new diseases; in particular we have seen the increase of stress diseases resulting from people's attempts to adjust to rapid technological change and overspill. During that time, no acceptable index of social welfare has shown any tendency to rise. Indices of *dis-welfare* have. Divorce rates, suicide rates, homicide rates, are substantially higher today than before the last war. Since then, white-collar crime has soared, and so have crimes of violence, especially among the young. As for human dignity, over the last three decades or so city streets have become tawdry, freakish, or desolate and unsafe. Commercial interests proffer a variety of pornography and sadistic titillation in magazines, on stage, and in the movies, to an uprooted, gullible, and disoriented populace many of whom seek release from a sense of desolation through carnality, drugs, and endless travel.

I am not arguing that "backward" is better than "forward"! I am not arguing that life in the 19th century, the heyday of capitalism, did not include some pretty raw features! What I am arguing is that there can be grave doubts that life today, taken all 'round, is better than it ever was before in history; and there can be even graver doubts that the pursuit of economic growth will eventually carry us into the millennium.

No one is going to argue against a resolution to provide people with "a decent way of life." But before thinking of extending the affluence of the United States to less fortunate countries, and particularly to the "over five billion souls on earth at the end of the century" (more likely to be seven to eight billion!), one should be a little more skeptical of how that affluence has served the people of America. If this decent way of life has eluded the American people, it is certainly not because of a lack of material wealth, but because of institutional myopia that results from an unholy degree of absorption in pushing ahead. Anyone who visits America and looks around him cannot but be struck by the sheer amount of near-garbage that people amass—what an economist might reasonably call "demerit" goods. As I shall be reminded, these things have been freely chosen by the People—a fact that provides irrefutable evidence of the slow erosion of taste, and also of the gradual constraints on choice, both arising from the continuance of economic growth in already affluent societies. (In order to assure Mr. Bruce-Briggs that I am not xenophobic, I will add that Western Europe, and Britain also, are treading the same path.)

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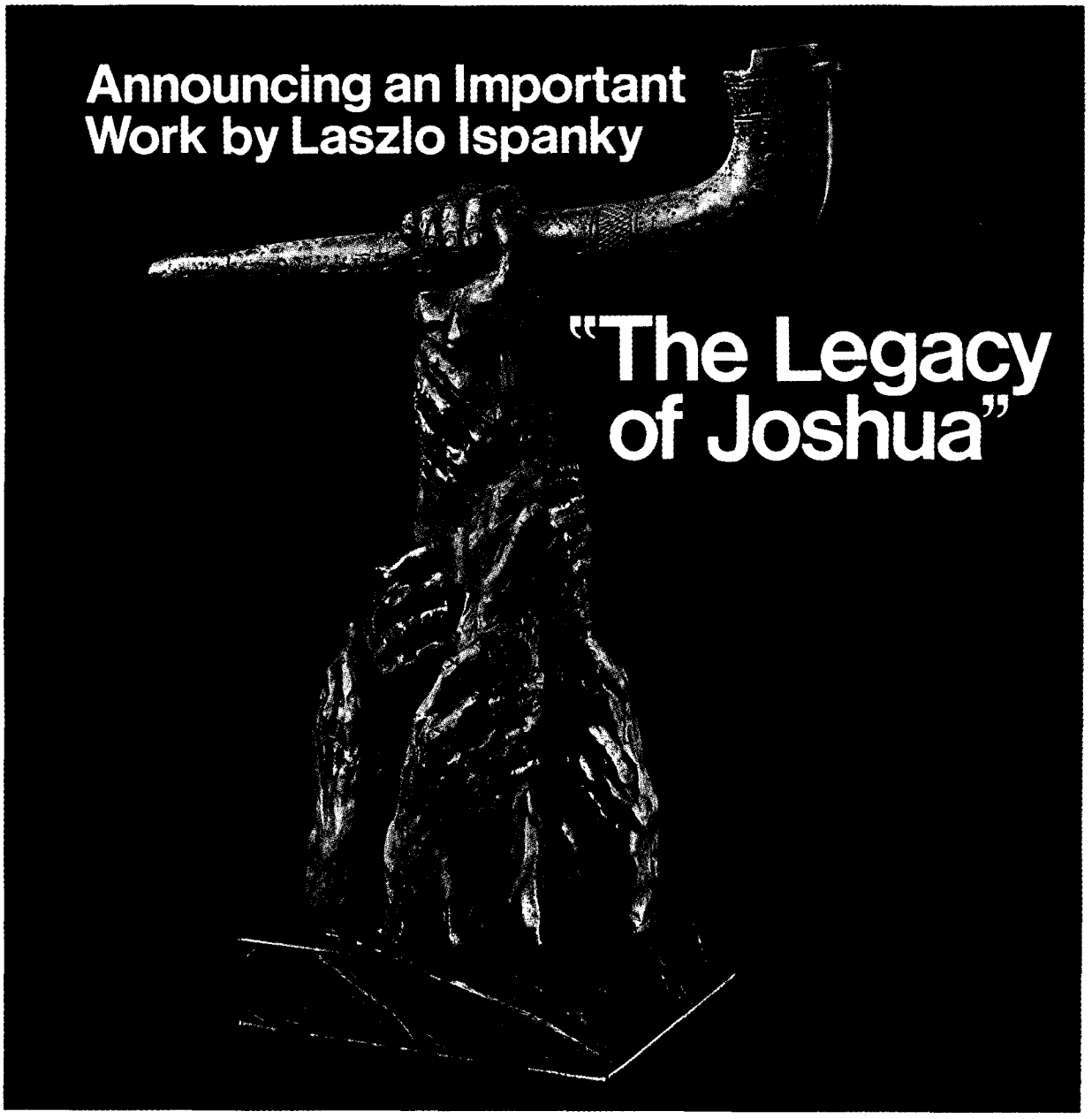

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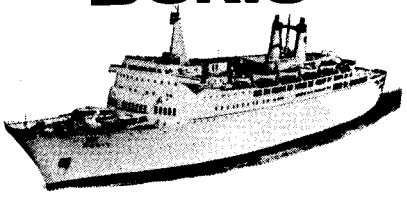

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Do I exaggerate? I don't think so. "Real" income per capita in the United States is about twice as high as it was in 1951, and about five times as high as it was in the Britain of 1951, when rationing had not been completely removed. But this was before the automobile and the developer had made hideous our cities and suburbs, before television held people in a semi-bovine state for up to six hours a day, before the cult of youth and of exhibitionist attire, and before hippiedom, drugs, gay liberation, and therapeutic pornography had begun to spread like a fungus over the land. The skies in those innocent days were not rent by shrieking aircraft, nor was the air in the cities thick with engine fumes. People could stroll along the streets and beguile the time in conversation without screaming at one another. If not carefree, at least people were opening their front doors. Compared with the figures in America today, suicide, violence, and thuggery were negligible.

If Mr. Bruce-Briggs will concede no more than that life in the Britain of 1951 was altogether tolerable, and that it is hardly more tolerable today in the United States, then my speculation about the proportion of near-garbage in the American GNP cannot be dismissed. And whether he concedes it or not, I am prepared to maintain that the British people were manifestly more contented with their lot and more cheerful than are the Americans today. Also, that their lives were certainly less frantic, wearing, and frustrating.

What I am suggesting is that we do not need quite as much GNP as growthmen seem to imply in order to achieve a sane and decent way of life. While I am wholly aware of the problems of the poorer countries—which are, to some extent, a consequence of the products (and the example) of economic growth in the richer countries—the hectic pursuit of sustained economic growth is not the only way out for these countries. More discriminate economic growth for a little while longer, perhaps? For the poor countries, this can be only part of the answer to their problems. For the already affluent, it is not any part of the answer.

E. J. MISHAN
London School of Economics
London, England

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

B. Bruce-Briggs has attacked the whole idea of "zero growth." He begins with a slap at Malthus, who has never been popular in a country that has worshipped growth since long before its official birth in 1776. The earth can easily support populations many times larger than that of today, Mr. Bruce-Briggs argues, and besides, population growth is slowing down. There will be plenty of energy and no pollution to speak of. The emotional support of neo-Malthusians is the reluctance of the upper-middle class to share its status with the common mass of humanity.

As a member of the upper-middle class, I'll admit Mr. Bruce-Briggs has a point. Since I was young the world has become horribly crowded; many of the good things I enjoyed as a matter of course, such as uncrowded transport and vacations in lonely places, are now considered luxuries I never had any right to in the first place. More to the point—what right do I have to be well fed, to receive decent medical and dental care and a host of other luxuries of my class when the world is so full of those who will never enjoy these benefits in all their lives? . . .

In differing with Mr. Bruce-Briggs, I shall start first with Malthus. Whether I am a Malthusian or a neo-Malthusian, I have never felt that Malthus was a god; like any great thinker, he was wrong in a number of trivia. But Malthus has remained influential . . . for a basic, unanswerable truth: a *geometrically-increasing population cannot long be provided the necessities of life*. Somehow, somewhere within a fairly small number of generations, population growth will be checked. The checks may be "negative checks," i.e., those which are deliberately applied by humanity in an effort to decrease human misery—late marriage, celibacy, birth reduction by a variety of means. But if these do not do the job they will be supplanted by "positive checks"—starvation, disease, violence, and rising death rates. . . . Anyone who remembers his high-school algebra can prove in a few minutes, using ordinary logarithms, that Malthus was right. Let us start with the world population at several billions (as it is today), and set an annual increase rate of 1.5 per cent, somewhat less than the average since 1945. Since the anti-Malthusians claim we can dispense with "positive checks" through our ingenu-

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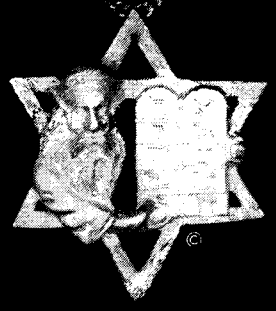

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ity, we will assume they are right; also that "negative checks" are as unnecessary and ignored as they are by the same people. Let us continue this state of affairs for a hundred centuries, about the time that has elapsed since the invention of agriculture. At the end of that period there will not be enough *mass*, including stars and planets and gas and dust and radiation, within the optical range of our biggest telescopes to make up the bodies then living. . . .

It usually turns out in fact that nobody has really claimed that Malthus was wrong—just wrong for the foreseeable future. Human expansion may be limited, but not (thank God) in our lifetimes. So let the geometric progression go on, for when the reckoning comes due we shall all be dead.

Let us look that idea over a little. Mr. Bruce-Briggs argues that the earth can easily support much larger populations than it does now. I think so too; but not "easily." For instance, the reason it isn't doing so already is bad government and bad business policy.

Yet even today's bad governments and bad businesses are "good" by the standards of any century but our own. As enterprises become enormous and populations uncountable, acceptable standards of "good" rise accordingly. The water supply that kept the colonies healthy in 1620 would generate a typhoid epidemic today in a few weeks. The transport and communications that served our ancestors would be totally inadequate for us now. A police strike in old New Amsterdam would have been a joke; in modern New York it would be instant chaos.

In short—to support ever larger populations we must become increasingly dependent on a narrow range of motivations and actions involving great numbers of people. The risk of "accident, miscalculation, and madness" multiplies in proportion to the complexity and necessity of the social arrangements. It is in that context that we must consider what kind of checks will eventually stop population expansion, when the day comes.

Will the checks be "negative"? For the sake of our not-so-remote descendants we had better hope so. But whatever the problems in so controlling population now, they will be multiplied in the future. Or will the checks be "positive"? . . . If so, the catastrophe will be that much the greater.

Then where should humanity stop, if stop it must? I say it should have stopped quite some time ago. Yesterday is by no means too soon. . . .

Have we only scratched the surface of resources? For some things, to be sure. But for others, we have scratched them clean off the earth.

Perhaps it doesn't matter what happens to the world's cetaceans and great cats; whatever they provide can be replaced by substitutes. But in the turmoil of replacement, many species have vanished forever and the rate of extermination is steadily rising. Nor does anyone know where the process will stop; those who know the most are the least sanguine.

Such sentiments mark me as a member of my class; in fact, of a class much above my own. For throughout history, it has been the privileged aristocracy that has insisted, through various ignoble motives, on preserving outmoded and obsolete wild species. The mass of men have always been too intent on getting a better life (or on just staying alive) to bother.

One cannot answer the argument that no matter what gets scratched off, human ingenuity will find substitutes. Perhaps there will even be substitutes for mass and space, proving Malthus wrong at last. But a word of caution is in order: with human ingenuity comes human error. We have not always been happy with its products, which may turn out to have unexpected side effects and disastrous social consequences. For all its creativity, the 20th century has not been very stable or secure to live in. . . .

(Dr.) Alfred B. Mason
Long Beach, California

To the Editor of Commentary:

I am impressed by the optimism of B. Bruce-Briggs. He must be aware, however, that we already have severe problems accommodating our present population. We all hope he is right in his predictions about future resources, food, and improved technology. To encourage population growth before these become available, on the other hand, is patently foolish.

(Dr.) David B. Bingham
ZPG Medical Committee
Norwich, Connecticut

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To the Editor of Commentary:

There is of course considerable evidence against B. Bruce-Briggs's claim that this planet has no population problem. Personally, I believe that evidence to be overwhelming. However, even assuming that the evidence on each side of the argument is equal in weight, there is a simple, commonsense test for deciding which side to accept: since we must make a choice between the two sides, either consciously or by default, we should select the side which, if wrong, will carry the least serious consequences. If we accept the premise that there is no population problem and we are wrong, the results will clearly be disastrous. If we accept the premise that there is a serious population problem demanding immediate attention and we are wrong, it is difficult to perceive any significant deleterious consequences. Since we must choose, let us choose so as to err on the side of caution.

Larry D. Barnett
Gainesville, Florida

To the Editor of Commentary:

I will make only the most obvious criticism of B. Bruce-Briggs's opening statement: "The earth can easily support populations and gross world products many times larger than today's." The United Nations, which has devoted an enormous amount of time, money, and effort to problems of overpopulation . . . has set aside 1974 as World Population Year. As a result of its first-hand experience with mass starvation and resource depletion, the UN is in a much better situation to evaluate the problem than Mr. Bruce-Briggs.

His second most irresponsible statement is that "pollution control is cheap and easy, once the will is evident." It is obvious that he has never joined forces with conservation groups to try to get a law enacted, nationally or statewide, to curtail pollution. If he had, he would know that industry continues to use vast amounts of money to keep these bills from ever becoming laws, and industry has most gratuity-receiving legislators on its side. The "will" is there, but unfortunately those who care find their pleas fall upon mostly deaf ears. . . .

Carol Cobb
Jacksonville, Florida

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . Faith in economic forces and in technological fixes was indeed once justified. Economics, which could create resources by permitting rising prices to make uneconomic mineral deposits profitable, and technology, which, given time and elbow room, could generally solve environmental problems, operated within wide margins of time and matter that permitted them a chance, and a second and third chance, to find their solutions. A world not yet filled with man and his creatures and wastes could absorb unexpected disasters, could yield newly discovered resources, while man solved his problems, often through trial and error.

That roomy world does not exist any more. It is disappearing in some directions faster than in others. It is disappearing now in terms of domestic petroleum reserves, and will disappear by the end of the century in terms of world petroleum reserves. Metals are somewhat farther behind, but specific ones will soon be as scarce as petroleum. . . .

The margin for error can disappear psychologically, too: many of us would argue passionately that it never existed at all for nuclear wastes. It can disappear unevenly in space: in terms of clean air and water, it has disappeared in many parts of the country and world already.

These purely geological constraints have always existed, but only now is man beginning to fill his world sufficiently to feel them. I see no grounds at all for assuming that solutions that worked in the past . . . will continue to work when the constraints not only severely restrict possible courses of action but also bring the consequences of our mistakes back upon our heads far faster and with far graver results than before.

In this newly small world . . . economic forces and technological fixes are no longer enough, and will often be found to be totally irrelevant. If it costs more to extract a barrel of oil than that oil is worth, in terms of energy, not dollars, then the price of that oil is totally irrelevant to whether or not it is extracted: it won't be. We will shortly reach that situation here, as more and more effort, energy, and material are required to find smaller, deeper, more hidden pools.

In summary, the geological constraints that are being encountered increasingly often as man fills the planet's surface and depletes its resources will determine what will and will not work, not thought patterns and attitudes formed back when the world was larger and man would not be hurt too badly whatever he did, right or wrong.

Russell L. Wheeler
Department of Geology and Geography
West Virginia University
Morgantown, West Virginia

To the Editor of Commentary:

B. Bruce-Briggs has predicted the early collapse of the oil cartel, a primitive price mechanism to manage the world's resources, as well as continuous economic growth, all leading toward a decent life for five to six billion people in the year 2000.

For the moment, the cartel of the oil-producing countries is still expanding, and not even Saudi Arabia has been able to make more than a dent in the price structure.

Concerning other resources, there are strong indications that new cartels, i.e. by the copper- and bauxite-producing countries, are in the offing. This means, of course, higher prices and more global inflation.

It may therefore be doubted whether, under such circumstances, continuous economic growth and increasing population will provide a decent life for all in the year 2000.

Edward D. Adler
New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . It is now long past the age of global discovery and exploration. We have crawled over our entire planet, viewed and measured and photographed it from space. It is totally familiar. There is no more space for healthy human habitation and comfortable mobility. . . . Is it too idealistic for each of us to expect an earthly existence which will leave us free to roam uncrowded lands and waters; free to eat fresh and varied food, drink sparkling water, breathe clean air; free from products with planned obsolescence or instant waste; free from personal fear and violence?

Never before have there been nearly four billion individuals on earth at the same time. During the hour I write this letter 10,000 more will be added, hour after hour, each individual requiring a lifetime sustenance of millions of tons of fresh water, tens of thousands of pounds of grain and meat, limitless units of energy. And in twen-

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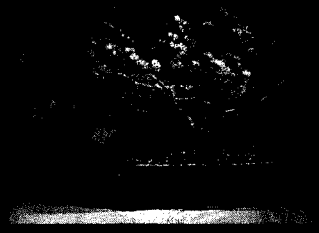

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ty-five years there will be three billion more of us alive than there are now. . . .

It is time to face realities, not to make prophecies. We have extended technology and worshipped material growth and greed and allowed our reproductive organs to run rampant. As we proliferate, the less unfortunate, stacked in sky-high laminated cubicles, feed on ersatz food spiked with chemicals, colored with fake dyes, and spiced with "additives." The two-thirds of us who are more unfortunate are starving or malnourished. . . .

At the present time, a population *reduction* is imperative. Surely we can conquer our lust for progeny, for accelerating growth . . . as masterfully as we are conquering disease. Surely we can limit our reproduction to suit our life span, and our land capacity, for the sake of human dignity and survival. By elevating parenthood from hit-or-miss practices to a procedure of forethought and by giving nonparenthood a chance to prevail, much can be accomplished toward this effort.

MURIEL MAYO
Bay Shore, Long Island

B. BRUCE-BRIGGS writes:

I listed John H. Knowles as a neo-Malthusian because of remarks attributed to him in a certain New York morning newspaper; but in subsequent private correspondence he has written that we were in agreement on most points, so I must apologize and retract the misrepresentation. But the above letter is quite different in tone and approach, perhaps because it reflects an institutional rather than a personal viewpoint. Dr. Knowles knows that famines have only occurred in primitive economies and appear today only when sudden local disasters—floods, droughts, and wars—have suddenly cut the accustomed food supply.

I must also apologize for the mistake of misspelling the name of René Dubos, the distinguished bacteriologist, "scientific-humanist" philosopher, and co-author with Barbara Ward of *Only One Earth: The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet,* the comprehensive and subtle neo-Malthusian tract commissioned by the UN to be the briefing document for the 1972 environmental conference at Stockholm.

Dr. Knowles's letter is the only one to raise the issue of our ability to manage further growth. While the high command of the Rockefeller Foundation is well placed to observe the lack of wisdom among the world's rulers, it is evident that our managerial capability has vastly improved in the last century; for example, except in the "centrally planned economies," present-day food production and distribution are not to be compared with current political and scientific capacity; we might consider relying less on management by politicians and scientists and more on farmers, workers, entrepreneurs, and administrators.

Most of E. J. Mishan's letter deals with certain aspects of contemporary life that displease him. I, too, find many of them distasteful, but I fail to see how most of them are caused by growth or prosperity and how less growth or less prosperity would alleviate them.

In general, Mr. Mishan speaks from the point of view of a member of the privileged classes. Thus, like most upper-middle-class commentators, he disapproves of the automobiles and suburbs that have given the average man the mobility and land once reserved for the rich. (Incidentally, though there are many more cars in London today than in 1951, there is—contrary to what Mr. Mishan suggests—much less air pollution: the infamous London fog which was still hanging over the city then is now pretty much a thing of the past.) Similarly when Mr. Mishan writes that "our health" has improved little, it should be understood that he refers to that of the privileged orders of the United Kingdom. As my article pointed out, the health gains for the upper classes in this century have been trivial. But since 1951, the worldwide average life expectancy has climbed from forty to fifty-five years.

I certainly will grant that life was tolerable for the British in 1951, but doubt they would prefer it to today. It was in 1951 that they threw out a Labour government which seemed to promise a permanent regime of austerity and overweening bureaucracy. Mr. Mishan's selection of that year as the apex of British history and his reference to rationing perhaps give a hint of the sort of political economy he believes desirable.

Mr. Mishan is quite rightly skeptical of the suggestion that widespread prosperity might liberate

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mankind from its historic selfishness. While I do not believe that the tree of life, however fruitful, will wholly divert Adam from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, there is some secular evidence for just such a proposition. In traditional no-growth economies like medieval England or contemporary Vietnam, life is "poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Taking care of one's own and damn the rest is the necessary morality. Only rich societies can afford unemployment insurance, Medicare, food stamps, etc.

Unfortunately the other letters fail to do justice to the serious neo-Malthusian position. Instead of emphasizing pollution and management issues—which are speculative and open to reasonable disagreement—the writers concentrate on the red herrings of resources and population.

Alfred B. Mason might have mentioned that among the "trivia" about which Malthus erred were the propositions that population grows geometrically and food production grows arithmetically. Both are false. Since these assumptions are central to his thesis, it is difficult to see how his analysis or his algebra is useful.

David B. Bingham and I are in complete agreement. To my knowledge, the only people in the world who are encouraging population growth are governments of those few countries like Israel and Brazil which consider themselves underpopulated—and would-be grandparents.

Larry D. Barnett gives us a secular version of Pascal's wager: if Christianity is false, conversion costs nothing; if true, everything is gained. Since the worst neo-Malthusian nightmare pales before an eternity of damnation, Mr. Barnett might follow his own reasoning and seek instruction for conversion.

On a more worldly level, if "we" agree that there is a population problem, then what? Presently there is a worldwide excess of eighty million births over deaths. How are "we" to prevent eighty million births? Who is Mr. Barnett or I to tell a couple in Brazil, Burma, or Brooklyn that they should not have a child? How are "we" to make them not have children? Or are "we" to increase the death rate? Regrettably, the latter solution is well within the technical means of the U.S. and the USSR.

Let me remind Carol Cobb that an example of the results of the "time, money, and effort" of the UN is the spending of five years to calculate population projections that could have been done by one man with a slide rule in five hours. Another example is the circulation of the misstatement cited by Muriel Mayo that "two-thirds of mankind" is undernourished—based upon standards that would make the Japanese undernourished.

I meant that pollution control is *technically* cheap and easy. Mrs. Cobb's claim that passing anti-pollution laws is difficult is not consistent with the past ten years of federal, state, and local legislation. To be sure, present legislation looks ineffectual to those people who want to conserve everything by blocking anything, like the Santa Barbara professor who wants to protect the civil rights of "frogs, even rocks."

Unlike Russell L. Wheeler, most geologists believe their science is just emerging from its infancy, and are pleased that factors having to do with growth promise to lift geology from the cellar of the physical sciences.

Edward D. Adler's position is difficult to understand. A cartel can only expand by adding members or increasing its share of the commodity cartelized, neither of which is happening. As pointed out by Edward N. Luttwak ["Farewell to Oil," May], oil is the only commodity for which substitutions are not easy. Materials such as iron, aluminum, copper, lead, plastic, glass, and even wood are highly interchangeable; if any material is cartelized, consumers will switch to others. In any event, what has inflation to do with growth? Many countries, like Brazil today, have inflation *and* growth. Inflation is a transfer of wealth.

If Mrs. Mayo wishes to enjoy uncrowded lands and waters, clean air, etc., why does she (like almost every other correspondent) live in or close to metropolitan areas which hold two-thirds of our population on 1 per cent of our national land area? Could it be that substantial benefits derive from prosperity, growth, high density, and large population concentrations?

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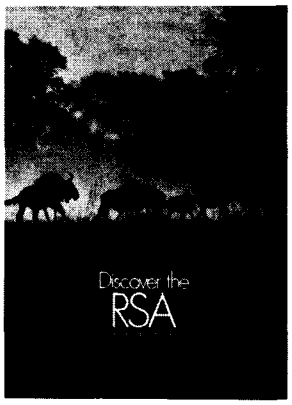

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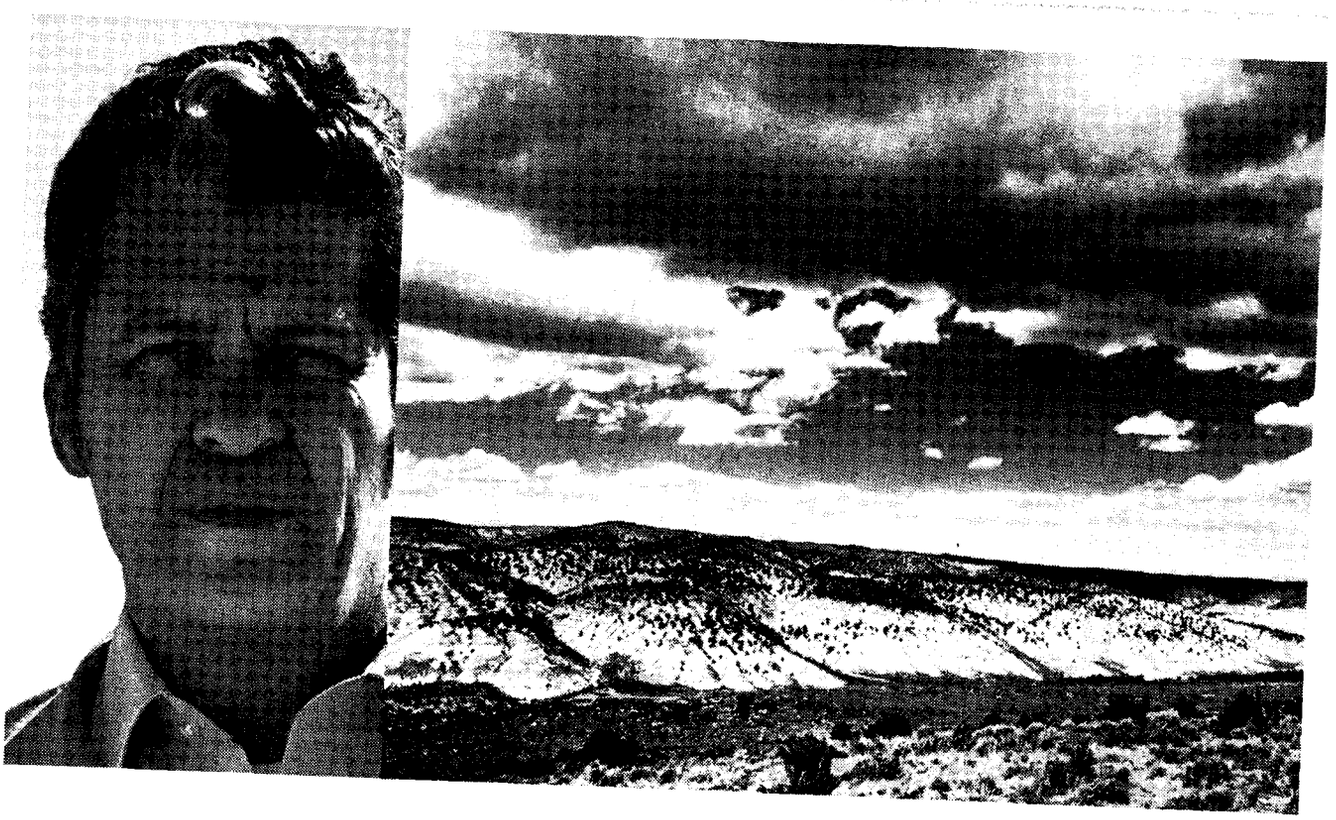

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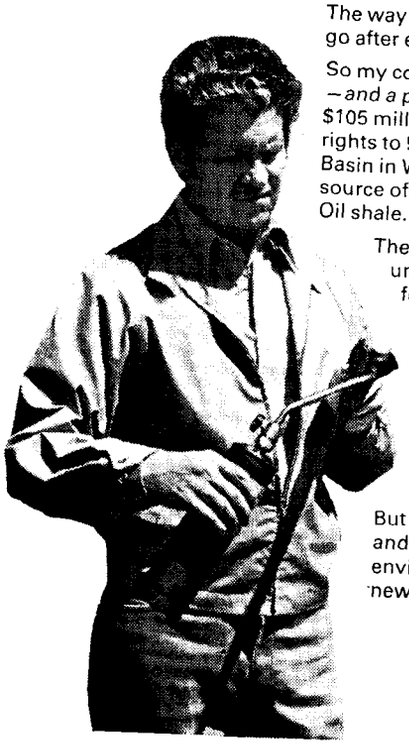

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But we're going to get it there—and keep it flowing. Once we do, our country will be just that much less dependent on foreign sources. And we think that's good for all of us.

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Mandelstam as Poet

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . No purpose would be served by enumerating the annoying linguistic and factual inaccuracies that mar Robert Alter's generally thoughtful and sensitive essay on Osip Mandelstam ["Mandelstam's Witness," June]. Mr. Alter is obviously no specialist in Russian literature and his acquaintance with Russian history is scant. (On non-Russian subjects, though, one might have expected Mr. Alter to know that the Crimea and the Caucasus are linked to Greece and the Mediterranean by more than one poet's "loose personal association of climate and geography": Crimea retains to this day numerous vestiges of links to ancient Greece, while the Caucasus is the land of the Golden Fleece.)

Three of Mr. Alter's basic assertions, however, must not be left unchallenged. The first is that "Mandelstam was an intensely Russian poet"; on the contrary, he was one of the *least* Russian poets, to the point of earning for himself the label "great Hellene." The second assertion is that Mandelstam's achievement "rapidly dominated" the "world of Russian poetry." This is a patent exaggeration. In pre-Soviet Russia Mandelstam's stature could hardly rival that of, say, Alexander Blok, while in the USSR no *serious* critic would be likely to brush aside a Pasternak or a Mayakovsky in favor of the categorical primacy of Mandelstam. Neither, for that matter, would many scholars in the West. And finally, we are informed that "many of those who can read him in the original regard him as the greatest Russian poet since Pushkin"—a statement that came as somewhat of a shock to me. After all, it implies that Mandelstam's genius overshadows that of Lermontov, Fet, Tyutchev, and a host of others.

. . . I believe that most of Mr. Alter's readers are unaware of the unconventionality of his views. Permit me to quote from *Russian Literature under Lenin and Stalin,* a classic work on the subject by Gleb Struve, the foremost expert on Mandelstam and editor of the only serious edition of the poet's works (referred to, incidentally, in Mr. Alter's essay):

> One of the leaders of pre-Revolutionary Acmeism, Osip Emilievich Mandelstam was one of the major poets of the pre-Soviet period of Russian literature. But he was also one of the few poets of that brilliant period who not only survived the Revolution but continued to hold a small but distinguished place on the Soviet literary scene. Mandelstam's first two books of poems . . . revealed him as a poet of great originality, a subtle and fastidious craftsman, steeped in classical and West European culture. In the words of Mirsky, "Mandelstam's diction attains sometimes to splendid 'Latin' sonority". . . .

Advancing extravagant claims for Mandelstam's stature will probably, in the long run, prove a disservice to the great poet's reputation. . . .

Maurice Friedberg
Department of Slavic Languages
and Literature
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana

Robert Alter writes:

What I actually said about the Crimea and the Caucasus was that they were considered by Mandelstam to be part of "the Mediterranean sacred soil," i.e., linked with the Holy Land, and *that* is surely a "loose personal association of climate and geography." In regard to Mandelstam's Russianness, I suspect that Maurice Friedberg and I are talking about two different things. Much of my essay, in fact, was devoted precisely to showing how Mandelstam was a "Mediterranean" poet. When I described him as "intensely Russian," I was referring specifically, as my immediate context made quite clear, to the dense texture of allusions to Russian history and to previous Russian literature in much of his verse, and my guide on this point was the poem-by-poem critical analysis provided by Clarence Brown in his study of Mandelstam.

As for Mandelstam's stature and reputation, I of course did not mean to imply that he had no serious competitors, and I appreciate Mr. Friedberg's mention of Pasternak and Mayakovsky (to which one might well add Akhmatova and Tsvetaeva). Ranking of poets is largely a matter of the critic's taste, and I obviously do not have the competence myself to pass judgment on Russian poetry, nor did I pretend to do that in my article. However, if Mr. Friedberg cites the authority of one of my Berkeley Slavic colleagues, Gleb Struve, I'm sure he would not question the expertise in Russian matters of another distinguished member of that same department, Simon Karlinsky, who, in the New York *Times Book Review* for January 20, 1974, asserted that some critics have recently dared "to suggest that in Mandelstam Russian poetry at last has a poet of a stature comparable to Pushkin's—a claim that even the most fanatical admirers of Blok, Mayakovsky, or Pasternak would not dream of making." Now Karlinsky was careful enough to say "a few brave voices," and I must admit that I was a little careless in saying "many readers." I stand corrected on that wording, and I am grateful for Mr. Friedberg's concern about inflating reputations, a concern I certainly share.

Justice and the Courts

To the Editor of Commentary:

Joseph W. Bishop, Jr., in his review of Macklin Fleming's *The Price of Perfect Justice* [Books in Review, July] applauds Justice Fleming's attack on the power of federal courts to review state court criminal proceedings. It is "not easy," according to Mr. Bishop, "to find a case in which it seems probable, or even reasonably possible, that an innocent man was punished." Even *Miller* v. *Pate,* which Judge Friendly declared was one of the "glories of federal *habeas corpus,*" was, in the Fleming-Bishop view, wrongly decided. There, in 1967, the Supreme Court upset the conviction of a man sentenced to death for the rape-murder of an eight-year-old girl. But "alas," declares Mr. Bishop, "Justice Fleming's exhaustive examination of the evidence in that case (including some vital evidence that the Supreme Court ignored) leaves the reader with small doubt that the original verdict of guilty was just."

As Miller's counsel in the Supreme Court, may I say a word? There—seven years after conviction and seven death dates—in a federal *habeas corpus* action, for the first time Miller was allowed a scientific examination of a pair of heavily stained shorts found by the authorities near the crime scene, and identified by Miller, in a soon repudiated confession, as abandoned by him. At the trial, a prosecution expert testified to blood of the child's type on the shorts. The prosecution told the jury of "those shorts . . . with blood." Miller's expert found only paint, and no

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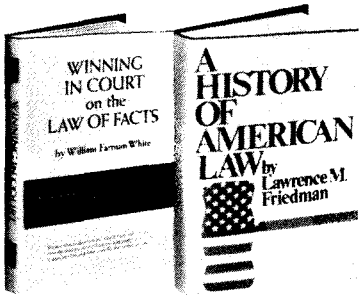

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blood residue on the shorts. Subpoenaed prosecution files revealed knowledge of the paint long before trial, yet this fact was never revealed to the trial judge, the jury, or the defense. The Supreme Court ignored no evidence, it simply picked out one egregious ground for reversal. . . . The full story is set out in my recent book, *Scapegoat Justice: Lloyd Miller and the Failure of the American Legal System* (Indiana University Press, 1973). A careful analysis of the known facts demonstrates, I think, that Miller was not guilty.

. . . Tragically, all too often state courts countenance gross violations of due process. The federal courts are an indispensable avenue for justice.

The Fleming-Bishop reaction to the Miller case is disturbing: they tolerate, even in a capital case, prosecution suppression of evidence inconsistent with guilt, and then, when the facts come to light in a federal court, they sit as a super jury, declaring that the newly revealed evidence should not change the result.

If the criminal process is to teach morality to the accused and to the rest of us, it must act honorably. To the extent it tolerates suppression of evidence, chicanery, and low blows, it will be perceived not as society's instrument for justice, but simply as an instrument of wrong and oppression, worse in a sense than the criminal, because of its hypocrisy.

WILLARD J. LASSERS
Chicago, Illinois

JOSEPH W. BISHOP, JR. writes:

Willard J. Lassers is naturally and properly convinced that his client was innocent. All I know about the record in *Miller* v. *Pate* is what the Supreme Court said in its opinion and what Justice Fleming said in his book, which latter struck me as detailed and exhaustive and, presumably, truthful. I am at present at the University of Cambridge in England and the book is not available here, but my recollection is that his account of the evidence, particularly concerning the presence of blood as well as paint on the shorts, differs in some respects from that of Mr. Lassers. I can only repeat what I said, that this reader, at least, found Fleming's analysis convincing. Readers will have to compare it with Mr. Lassers's and make up their own minds.

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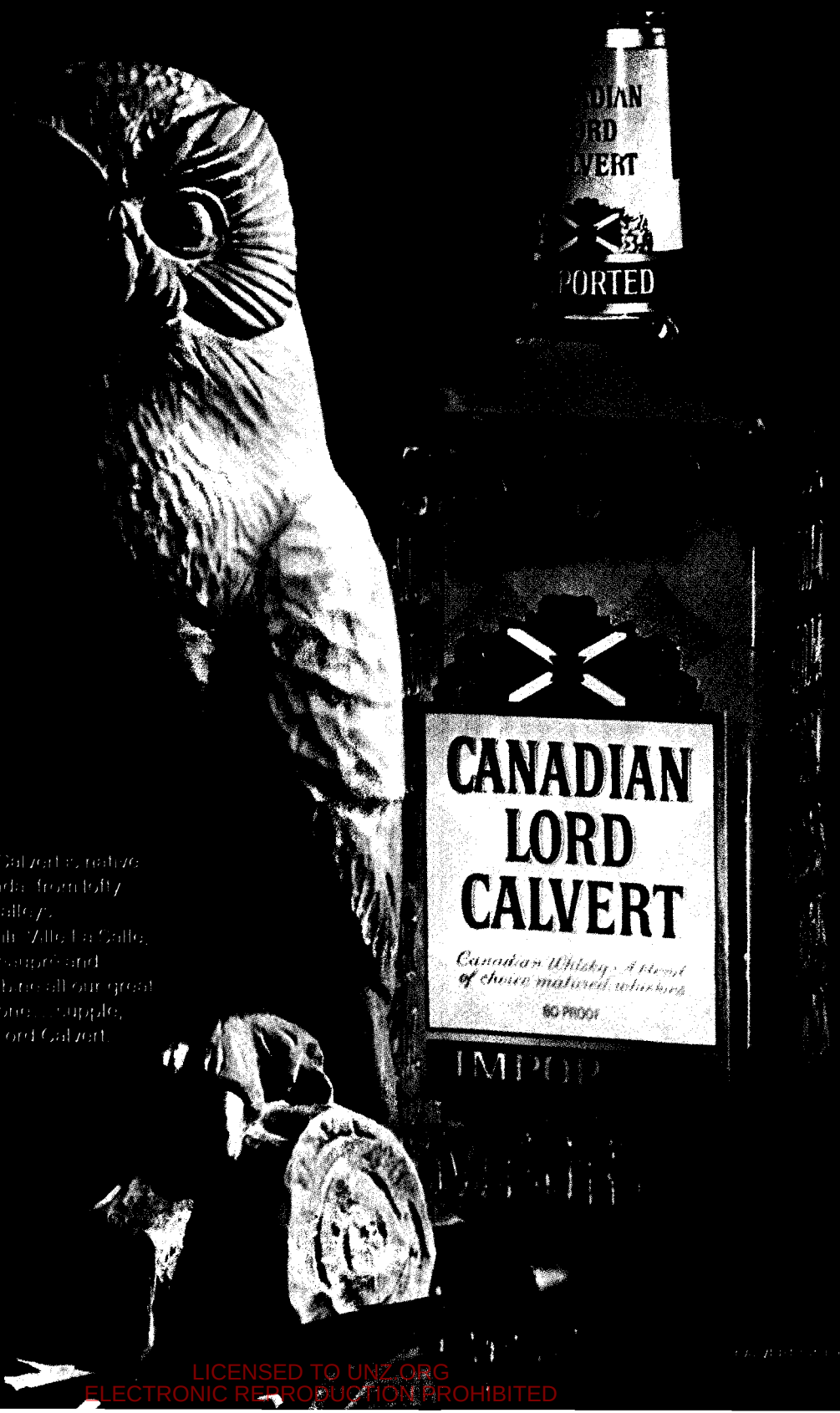

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Moving North

To the Editor of Commentary:

In his thoughtful review of Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* [Books in Review, August], Nathan Glazer correctly calls attention to Fogel and Engerman's insistence that "the rehabilitation of the slave-owning South can only lead to the unveiling of a post-Civil War record in both South and North that reduced the Negro, in all measurable ways, *below* the level he had achieved under slavery. And as a matter of fact, this record is now being compiled by the same methods that were used to change our view of slavery." That is precisely one of the many messages in *Time on the Cross.*

Later in the same review, Mr. Glazer adds: "After Fogel-Engerman—we are being warned—there comes Herbert Gutman with his sobering story of the destruction of the black family in the post-Civil War North."

Authors enjoy pre-publication publicity of most kinds, but this is hardly the message in my forthcoming study. Mr. Glazer has been misinformed. The study carries migrant Southern rural blacks into Central Harlem in 1925. An examination of 13,922 black Harlem households shows that about 85 per cent had in them a husband and wife or two parents with children. Women not yet thirty and heading male-absent households with children in them accounted for 3 per cent of these nearly 14,000 black households. This is hardly evidence of the "destruction of the black family in the post-Civil War North."

What happened after 1930 remains to be studied. But prior to that date, there is no evidence for the kind of "deterioration" hinted at so vigorously by Fogel and Engerman. This does not mean that migrant blacks were well off or "just another immigrant group." But it does mean that in the first phase of the great Southern black migration to Northern cities in this century, the "black family" revealed unusual adaptive capacities that have been greatly misunderstood by most sociologists and historians.

Herbert G. Gutman
Department of History
City College-CUNY
New York City

Orthodoxy

To the Editor of Commentary:

I read David Singer's perceptive, sympathetic, and yet critical appraisal of present-day Orthodoxy ["Voices of Orthodoxy," July] with extreme interest. . . .

As an outside observer, the author displays considerable acumen and objectivity in portraying the major divisions within Orthodoxy at the present time. But I am not sure whether his characterization of these divisions as reflecting "a church-sect dichotomy that is familiar to sociologists of religion" is altogether accurate, or even tenable. . . . As I pointed out in . . . "Rabbis and Deans," in the very "Review of Recent Halakhic Periodical Literature" which Mr. Singer mentions so appreciatively (*Tradition,* Spring and Summer, 1966), the conflicts and tensions between the two camps are real enough, though I am bound to add that it is largely out of these tensions, I believe, that the dynamics of Orthodox vitality have been generated. . . .

The two streams differ mainly in their attitude to secular studies and relations with the outside world generally (including the religious significance of Jewish statehood); in the emphasis placed on the religious community, under the jurisdiction of practicing rabbis, versus the *yeshivot,* guided by their deans, as the custodians of Jewish Law and religious policies; in an inward-looking outlook of self-defense through withdrawal and insulation as against an air of self-confidence warranting participation in intercommunal activities. The "modern Orthodox" have come to terms with the society and thought around them; the "sectarians"—or isolationalists as I would prefer to call them—do not yet feel secure enough to expose their followers to the buffeting and challenges of their environment.

But the crux of the conflict can hardly be described as a church-sect encounter. Modern Orthodoxy can no more be identified as "the establishment" than those opposed to it can be categorized as "sectarians." Nor are the lines of demarcation between the two camps as clearly drawn as is suggested in the article. The perimeters of both circles intersect to provide a considerable area of common agreement and joint endeavor, ideologically as well as organizationally. Thus, the vast network of day schools and the great *yeshivot,* though overwhelmingly under "sectarian" control, today belong to the Orthodox "establishment" no less than the major Orthodox community organizations, governed as they mostly are by "modern Orthodox" rabbis and lay leaders. In fact, the majority of "modern Orthodox" Jews now send their children to "sectarian" academies of learning, while a great many "sectarians" still rely on "modern Orthodox" institutions and services for their congregational facilities, the organization of *kashrut,* and certainly for the financial support of their schools and *yeshivot.* The cooperation between the two Orthodox constituencies is therefore not merely functional, but at least equally significant on the institutional, organizational, and especially educational levels. What the "Orthodox modernists" seek is not so much a *modus vivendi* with the "sectarians"—this exists at numerous levels—but rather a recognition that both schools of thought may be needed, together with the rivalries between them, to maintain the momentum of Orthodox ascendancy.

Finally, in his projections for the future, I missed some reference by Mr. Singer to demographic trends which now seem heavily to favor the eventual predominance of Orthodoxy. The disproportionately high birthrate among strictly observant Jews, combined with their comparatively low rate of defection through assimilation and intermarriage, is bound to regain for Orthodoxy, in one or two generations, its former hegemony as the mainstream of Jewish life.

If the "Voices" Mr. Singer has heard and so resonantly articulated will therefore sound to some not unlike echoes of Darwin's "Survival of the Fittest," this will be yet another vindication of our perennial faith in the capacity of traditional Judaism to harmonize its timeless teachings with modern conditions in the continuous evolution of the Jewish people and its historic commitment.

(Chief Rabbi)
Immanuel Jakobovits
London, England

To the Editor of Commentary:

In "Voices of Orthodoxy" David Singer presents the full range of American Orthodoxy . . . in one tidy package. But when one sees such a vibrant movement so neatly

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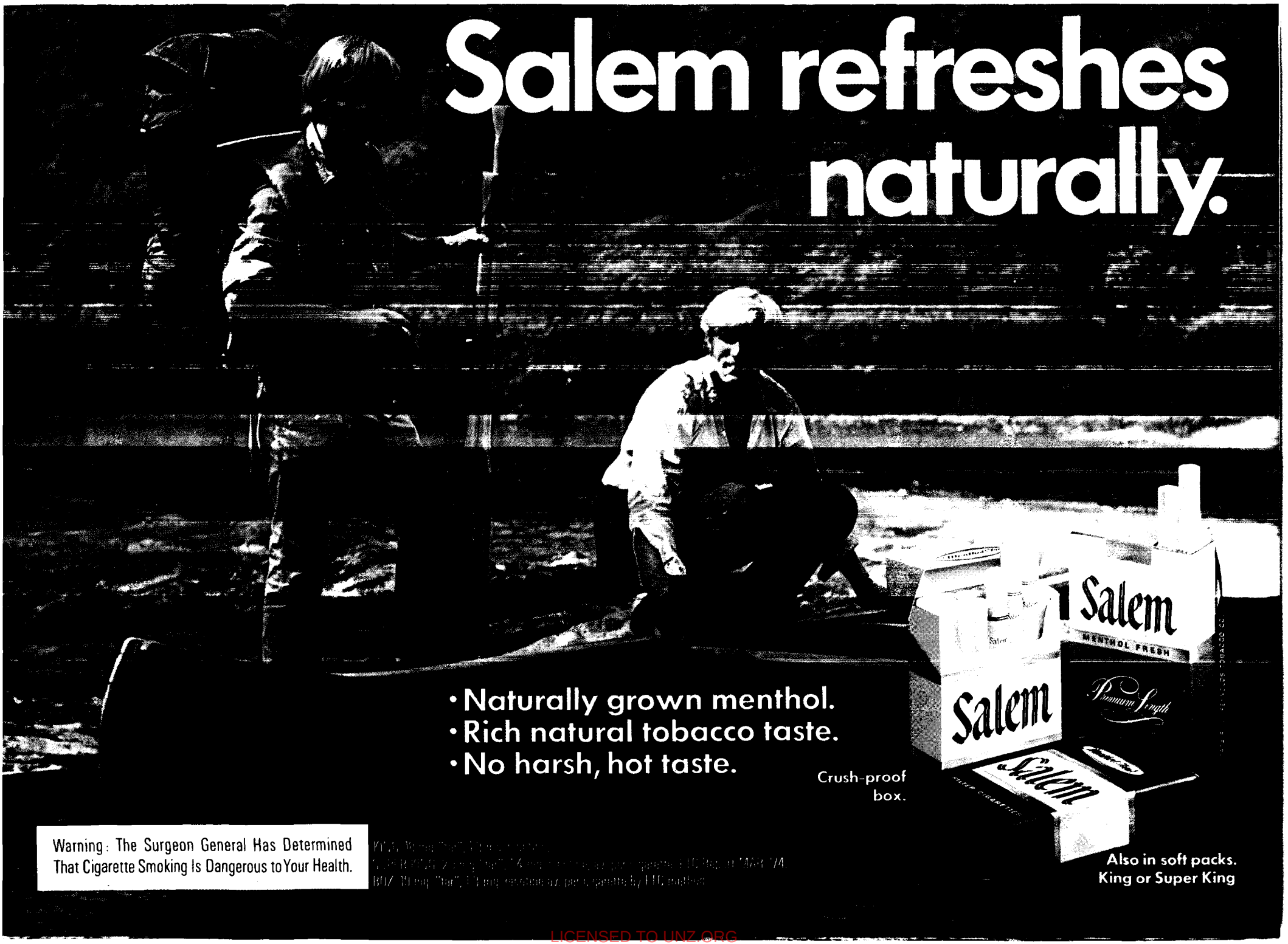

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classified and labeled one begins to suspect the analysis. Either the judgments are superficial or the classifications are contrived. Mr. Singer is guilty on both counts. . . .

To represent the modernist subgroup within Orthodoxy (the "churchists"), Mr. Singer selects *Tradition*, a professional journal published by the Rabbinical Council of America, written for rabbis by rabbis. . . . To represent the traditionalists (the "sectarians") he chooses the *Jewish Observer*, a popular intellectual journal that discusses current problems for a mixed lay and rabbinical readership but deliberately avoids topics that are the exclusive concern of the professional clergy. To Mr. Singer the "sectarians," represented by the editorial content of the *Jewish Observer*, suffer from negativism: "An abundance of spirit, but . . . a failure of nerve."

While it is flattering to be selected to represent the full range of "sectarian" activity, one is also somewhat puzzled: why should a group be judged solely on the basis of the content of its journal, when the record of its other activities is so readily available? In fact, the positive contributions of the "sectarians" to American Orthodoxy encompass everything Mr. Singer mentions in his introductory section, including the building of an uncompromising Orthodoxy in America and Israel, the emergence of strong hasidic communities, the growing network of yeshiva day schools and high schools, and the high level of Torah scholarship in institutions of advanced study. The specific contributions of Agudath Israel (sponsor of the *Jewish Observer*) to the growth of Orthodoxy in America lie in its public role as advocate, spokesman, and initiator of legislation on behalf of the *yeshivot* and the Orthodox community as a whole, though the Agudah's constructive work actually predates by many years these recent activities. . . . And even its detractors admit that Agudath Israel's educational programs, . . . involving over 20,000 children from coast to coast, have trained cadres of Torah-loyal, strongly committed activists who are in the forefront of every major activity for Jewish survival in this country and overseas. Beyond this, Agudath Israel has served as the prime spokesman for the Torah community: . . . it articulates a *daas Torah* view, determined by its Council of Torah Sages, which spells out an indigenously Jewish approach. For example, where others have seen the need to respond to an overriding call to liberalism—even at the expense of the Jew's opportunities and rights—Agudath Israel has always sensed the need to secure Jewish economic and social survival first. And where others still see the totality of all Jewish aspirations in the ideal of the State of Israel as a national homeland, the Agudah persists in viewing it as only one feature, although a dominant one, of a Torah-centered destiny. . . .

As an example of negativism, Mr. Singer cites several articles in the *Jewish Observer* that decry college attendance for the yeshiva student: "It is taken for granted," he states, "that much of secular culture is a form of heresy, and a college education for anything other than strictly vocational purposes is strongly opposed." But his samplings are limited and one-sided. The Orthodoxy encompassed by Agudath Israel and represented by the *Jewish Observer* has a diversity of views. Some, indeed, would justify a college education only when it prepares the student for a vocation—if at all. Others see higher education as an opportunity for deepening one's understanding of the world, for the ultimate enhancement of the individual's spiritual life. Both views have been voiced in the *Jewish Observer* (see, for example, "Orthodox Modernism," October 1966 and "The Relevance of Rabbi S. R. Hirsch in Our Time," June 1969). . . .

I believe, however, that Mr. Singer selected this particular area, rather than others he might have chosen, precisely because he wanted to use the anti-college stand to illustrate the "sectarians' " mistrust of the modern world in contrast to the modernist talent (in his view) for facing contemporary problems in the spirit of Samson Raphael Hirsch. Mr. Singer further claims that the modernists are the offspring of Hirsch's neo-Orthodoxy. . . . But before taking his word for this, it would be more prudent to consult Hirsch's own life and writings. Rabbi Hirsch pioneered in Jewish life by setting up an independent Orthodox community *(Austrittsgemeinde)* with its own schools and synagogues. The credo of this community was that only a Torah-based Judaism was authentic, and one of his major victories was to have the Hirsch school recognized by the German government as a Jewish educational institution separate and distinct from the Reform-sponsored school. Something quite a bit different from today's indiscriminate ecumenism. . . .

Moreover, Rabbi Hirsch clearly states in his "Commentary on the Pentateuch": "The knowledge of the Torah and the understanding we derive from it is to be our principal concern and to be regarded as having been given to us as the absolute and firmly established truth. . . . Only as accessory knowledge and insofar as they serve to help the study of the Torah and are subordinated are . . . [other spheres of knowledge] to be studied (Leviticus, 18:5)."

When confronted with a contradiction between a *halachic* statement and a sociological trend or scientific "truth," Torah, as it has always been understood, must prevail. By contrast, "modern Orthodoxy" often seems impelled to seek ways to reinterpret *halacha* and Torah philosophy so as to conform to whatever is in vogue in the intellectual world—a rather non-Hirschian approach "to meeting the doubts of modern man." And, for that matter, an approach that is not precisely Orthodox.

This does not mean that Hirsch, the "sectarians," the Agudath Israel, and the *Jewish Observer* believe in shying away from modern thought and expression, but it does indicate a refusal to accept them on anything but the Torah's terms. Coming to grips with this modern world does not have to mean capitulation. . . .

It is far easier for an Orthodox Jew to accept all aspects of modern culture in an indiscriminate embrace, ironing out apparent contradictions with self-congratulatory sophistries and apologetics, than to be on the alert constantly, disclaiming more than accepting. It requires a good deal more courage to reject what is so attractively accessible in our free society, on the grounds that it does not measure up to an objective standard, than to accept it and to join in. Acting in this manner involves the risk of sounding a constant negative note and projecting an unattractive anachronistic image. But this has always been the price of Jewish survival. . . .

I cannot conclude without commenting on some additional points:

In Mr. Singer's view. . . . Orthodoxy is a "latecomer to the Jewish scene. . . ." But until the challenge of a strong deviationist movement

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(i.e., Reform), there was no need to fashion a name for mainstream Masoretic Judaism (i.e., Orthodoxy), which does indeed date back to Sinai—or to the Patriarchs, if you will. . . .

To use Charles Liebman's "church-sect dichotomy" to describe different groups within Orthodoxy, as Mr. Singer does, is to borrow from a Christian context. But as Rabbi Hirsch has said, Judaism is not a religion—a *shul* is not a church where rituals and sacraments are acted out, nor is a rabbi a priest who serves as a religious functionary. Judaism is an all-encompassing life-form.

Moreover, the distinction does not even apply. Throughout history, the community rabbi headed the community yeshiva, combining both elements of the "dichotomy." . . . Currently, here in America, the "sectarians" are very much "church" involved: hasidic communities are headed by the rabbi (or *rebbe*) figure and sponsor their own *yeshivot*; the famous Adath Yeshurun of Washington Heights, Frankfurt-am-Main Kehilla, has both synagogue and educational institutions; and the Agudah Israel is guided by an advisory council that includes both rabbinical figures and yeshiva heads—often in the same person. . . .

It has long been incumbent on COMMENTARY to draw attention to Orthodoxy not merely as a survival from a time long past, but as Jewry's vibrant life-force as well. Let me conclude by saying that I believe that Mr. Singer's focus on Orthodoxy is a commendable step in that direction.

(RABBI) NISSON WOLPIN
The Jewish Observer
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"Voices of Orthodoxy" is a welcome addition to the still limited material dealing with American Orthodoxy, but some of the points David Singer makes must be questioned. . . .

It is disturbing to see a differentiation made between the Agudah and the Hasidim when in fact the Agudah, both in Israel and the U.S., has the suport of many important hasidic dynastics (Ger, Wischnitz, Klausenberg), some of whom, it may be added, are at least as open to the "modern experience" (i.e., the Bostoner Hasidim of Rabbi L. Y. Horowitz) as are the much-touted Lubavitcher. . . . I think the trouble is Mr. Singer's willing-

Higher Education (cont'd)*

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ness to use the term "Hasidim" to mean simply the Hungarian Hasidim who cluster around the Hitachdut and its leader, the Satmar *Rebbe,* Rav Yoel Teitelbaum. . . . But they are by no means all of the hasidic community.

The central difficulty with the article, however, is that the three papers Mr. Singer discusses are totally different. *Tradition* is an academic journal written by academics for other academics, and it rarely descends to the mundane world of secular politics or day-to-day experience. . . . The *Jewish Observer* is a public-affairs magazine, the religious equivalent of the *New Republic* and the *New Leader.* Mr. Singer correctly points to its various faults, but it should be noted that there have been recent efforts not only to give the Torah point of view on various Jewish and public matters (drugs, aid to *yeshivot,* Israeli politics) but to suggest ways of avoiding real problems which upwardly mobile Orthodox Jews face (see Bernard Fryshman's article on college attendance and alternatives, February 1974).

But what surprises me most is Mr. Singer's willingness to treat the *Jewish Press* seriously. This paper is frankly a money-making proposition which attempts to appeal to as many Jewish groups as possible. Yes, there are articles in the names of Agudah and Mizrachi (Mafdal) spokesmen, but they appear along with articles in the name of Herut, the right-wing non-religious Israeli party, as well as others written by a non-religious American-Jewish Congressman. I think Mr. Singer is quite right in saying that there is a growing "Pan-Orthodox" alignment, at least partially because "Orthodox modernists" both here and in Israel are moving toward the Right . . . but the *Jewish Press* is no more an example of this phenomenon than (what shall I say?) William Safire's and Anthony Lewis's common appearance in the New York *Times* is a sign of a Left-Right reconciliation in America generally.

STEPHEN OREN
Jewish Studies Department
City College-CUNY
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

David Singer's perceptive and incisive analysis represents a significant contribution to an understanding of contemporary trends within the Orthodox community. But as editor of *Tradition* . . . I find it necessary to correct some misunderstandings.

Mr. Singer attributes to *Tradition* an ecumenical outlook, but the fact is that *Tradition* views itself as a "Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought." Its readiness to "open its pages on occasion to non-Orthodox contributors" is not at all evidence of ecumenism. Rather, it reflects a desire to utilize all available resources for the development of Orthodox Jewish thought. Our sole criterion is the intrinsic merit of the article. The writer's personal standards of religious observance are irrelevant. It also should be noted that, with the exception of articles directly challenging some of the tenets or pol-

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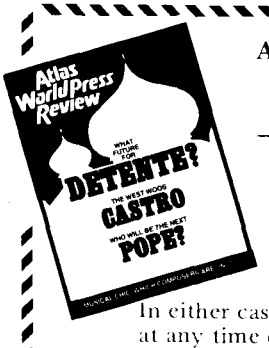

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icies of the Orthodox community, only articles embodying Orthodox Jewish attitudes have been accepted.

Tradition is far too pluralistic in its approach to the varieties of Orthodox philosophies to warrant classification as the official exponent of any particular Orthodox ideology. To be sure, *Tradition* recognizes the need to *confront* modernity, but this by no means can be interpreted as a blanket endorsement of a philosophy advocating "a creative synthesis between Torah and secular culture." Devotees of Samson Raphael Hirsch have no monopoly on our pages. Exponents of alternative approaches are equally welcome, provided that their contributions conform to our standard requirements of falling within the purview of Orthodox Jewish thought.

Contrary to Mr. Singer's assumption, *Tradition* is by no means committed to the proposition that Orthodox Jews should formally cooperate with non-Orthodox or secular groups, or that the National Religious party may serve in a coalition government. On such matters of policy, *Tradition* takes no editorial stand whatsoever.

Mr. Singer also contends that *Tradition* has not become a "serious vehicle for Orthodox self-criticism." For the record, however, it should be stated that "issues directly affecting the Orthodox community such as the position and role of women and the effectiveness of day school and yeshiva education," have received considerable attention in the pages of our journal. . . .

But let me assure Mr. Singer that the failure to include more critical material need not, as he suggests, be attributed to the "fundamental reason . . . that *Tradition* is forever being scrutinized and criticized by the Orthodox sectarians, whom it also has no wish to offend." There is a much simpler explanation: we simply did not have sufficient suitable material submitted to us.

WALTER S. WURZBURGER
Tradition
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Needless to say, as one who has been associated with *Tradition* from its inception, I was very gratified to read what David Singer had to say about the publication. I have but one comment to make with regard to his statement that our publication does not engage in enough criticism of our own movement. It so happens that the severest critics of Orthodox Judaism are to be found on the editorial board of *Tradition*, and we have always felt that if we spoke our minds in our own publication we might be accused of abusing the privilege of our status. That is why I, for example, have always used other publications, including COMMENTARY, to express such criticism. . . .

(RABBI) EMANUEL RACKMAN
Fifth Avenue Synagogue
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

David Singer observes that Orthodoxy is of rather recent vintage. Yet he follows this correct assessment with the more problematic assertion: "The traditionalist had . . . as had all Jews for countless generations . . . but one definition of a Jew, namely, a member of the community of believers who upheld the full authority of God's Written and Oral Law."

I make no claim as to what "traditionalists" may or may not have upheld for countless generations, but even a minimal understanding . . . of Jewish history conflicts with the implied claim that all Jews held this view concerning the Written and Oral Law. It is indeed the Orthodox view; it *may* have been the traditionalist view. It has not been the view of all Jews for countless generations, nor is it today. . . .

Orthodoxy may perhaps be placed well within, and be rooted far back in, *one* of the ageless traditions of Jews and others. But as a Jew, I am thankful that this tradition is not the only one to be found in Judaism.

ANDREW E. WESSEL
Munich, West Germany

DAVID SINGER writes:

Chief Rabbi Jakobovits finds my article "perceptive, sympathetic, and yet critical." Rabbi Wolpin, on the other hand, seems to regard it as largely an attack on sectarian Orthodoxy. I leave it to the readers of COMMENTARY to decide which of these two assessments is the correct one.

As to some of the specific points raised in the letters, I would merely note the following:

1) I am fully aware that the Orthodox sectarians can legitimately lay claim to an aspect of Samson Raphael Hirsch's legacy. It seems clear to me, however, that it is the Orthodox modernists who are most directly dependent upon Hirsch as a model. That is why they invoke his name so often.

2) There are, to be sure, a few small hasidic groups affiliated with the Agudah in the United States. The fact remains, however, that the largest and most influential hasidic sect, i.e., the Satmarer, is vehemently opposed to the Agudah's "heresies." Moreover, it is the heads of the advanced *yeshivot (rashe yeshivot)* who wield predominant power in the American Agudah, and the *Jewish Observer* reflects their point of view.

3) Of course, *Tradition* and the *Jewish Observer* are "totally different." But the differences are of crucial importance precisely because they point up divergent ideologies and cultural styles.

4) Since Rabbi Wolpin's criticisms are directed in the main against the spokesmen for modern Orthodoxy, I see no need to enter the fray. I merely want to indicate for the record that I neither stated nor implied that the Orthodox sectarians as a group "suffer from negativism." It was the *Jewish Observer* alone that I was referring to, and Rabbi Wolpin's letter clearly confirms my point.

5) I am sorry to disappoint Andrew E. Wessel, but prior to the modern period there was only one definition of a Jew, i.e., "a member of the community of believers who upheld the full authority of God's Written and Oral Law." On this matter Mr. Wessel might well consult Jacob Katz's *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* and *Tradition and Crisis*.

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Exxon representative takes Newark high school students on a guided tour of facilities at Exxon's Bayway Refinery.

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The 1980's. You'd expect them to be years of tremendous technological growth. But they may not be. Because by 1980, the U.S. may face a severe shortage of scientists and engineers—even though we have the talent to prevent such a shortage.

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Unfortunately, many students with aptitudes for successful careers in science or engineering don't recognize their potential. Or if they do, their schools often lack the academic facilities to prepare them for university science curriculums. Exxon is trying to change this situation in several ways.

For example, in cooperation with the National Science Foundation, Exxon recently funded an innovative summer engineering program for high school students in the Newark, N.J. area.

During the six-week program, conducted at the Newark College of Engineering, the students held classroom chalk-talks; went on fact-finding field trips; analyzed the data on a computer and formulated theoretical engineering solutions to problems facing Newark today. These included problems in transportation, recreation, housing, sanitation and pollution.

While it's impossible to say how many of these students will eventually *pursue careers in science and engi*neering, it's a fact that they all expressed more interest in these fields after the program. Next summer Exxon will be back in Newark. Until then, we'll continue our other programs to aid and promote engineering.

We'll again be working with the National Academy of Engineering to identify the critical factors limiting the enrollment and retention of minority students in engineering. We'll also be funding new engineering programs for minorities at 15 major colleges and universities—and helping to strengthen the engineering programs at predominately minority schools, such as Howard University, North Carolina A&T, Tuskegee Institute, Prairie View A&M, Tennessee State University and Southern University.

If we can help it, engineers and scientists are one shortage this country isn't going to have. We believe giving minority students equal opportunities in these fields is the way to prevent it.

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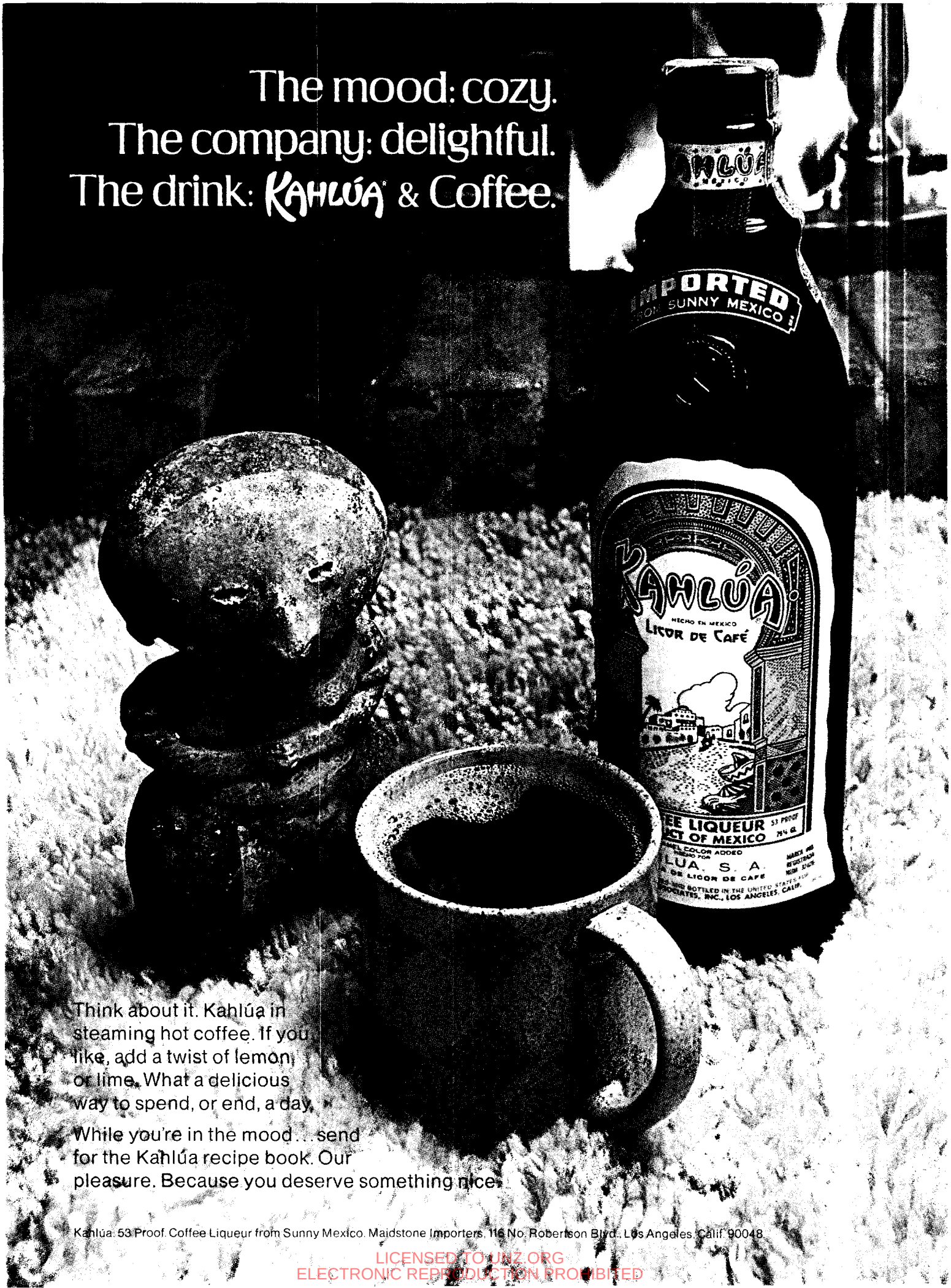
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In Defense of Monogamy

George Gilder

No way of life has been more glowingly celebrated in recent years than that of the "liberated" single male. Yet the truth is that men without wives in America generally seem to have a far harder time of it than married men—living lives that tend to be not only shorter, but also more destructive, both to themselves and to society. Compared to others in the population, the single man tends to be poor and neurotic. He is much less healthy and stable than the single woman. He is disposed to criminality, drugs, and violence. He is irresponsible about his debts, alcoholic, accident prone, and subject to venereal disease. Unless he can marry, he is often destined to a Hobbesean life—solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

Of course, there are many exceptions. There is no doubt that millions of unmarried men have managed to become disciplined and valuable citizens, and millions of divorced men have survived to a happy and productive old age. Nevertheless, the bachelor pattern is overwhelmingly marked by lack of sustained commitment and lack of orientation toward the future. The single man tends to move from one sexual partner to another, from job to job, city to city, rotating his life without growth or progress. And when a man gets divorced or widowed, he tends to revert in many respects to the temperament of the never-married single man.

One striking result of the bachelor pattern is low income: singleness correlates with poverty better than race does. Indeed, one way to explain black poverty is to point out that 39 per cent of black men are single, compared to 27 per cent of whites. Outside the South, married black males under thirty-five earn about 40 per cent more than white singles of the same age. And while it may be hard to believe, in view of the feminist outcry, single men earn about the same as single women of the same age and qualifications. Between the ages of thirty and forty-four, according to a Labor Department study, both earn about the same hourly wages. Single college graduates over age twenty-five earn about the same amount, whether male or female. Both earned a median income of approximately $9,500 in 1973.

Married men, however, earn nearly twice as much as singles of either sex. Between the ages of forty-five and fifty-four, for example, single white men with college degrees earn an average of about $10,500. Married men earn about $19,000. Single college graduates earn about the same as married high-school graduates. In addition, the married high-school graduate has a nearly four times better chance than a comparable single of eventually earning over $15,000. It would seem more important, then, for an ambitious young man to get married than to go to college. Married men are the only ones in the population who are a great success at earning money.

Although single men make no more money than women, who are said to be gravely victimized by bias, discrimination is not the bachelor's problem. His chief problem is his own psychological and physical condition. In general, men have more psychological problems than women, and single men have the most problems of all.

According to data assembled by Jessie Bernard, single men are far more prone to mental disorders than any other large group of Americans, with the possible exception of the divorced. Single men between twenty-five and sixty-five are over 30 per cent more likely than married men or single women to be depressed; 30 per cent more likely to show "phobic tendencies" and "passivity"; and almost twice as likely to show "severe neurotic symptoms." They are almost three times as prone to nervous breakdowns. They can't sleep (three times more insomnia), and if they do sleep, they are three times more likely to have nightmares. But perhaps the most striking data come from a study by Leo Srole and associates, *Mental Health in the Metropolis: The Midtown Manhattan Study*. Srole's report found that married men and women do not greatly differ in their mental health: about one-fifth of both are impaired. In this survey, unlike some others, single women are slightly better off. But like all other available data, the report shows single men to be in the worst condition and deteriorating most rapidly with age. Between the ages of fifty and fifty-nine,

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George Gilder, here making his first appearance in Commentary, is the author of *Sexual Suicide* and *Naked Nomads. Unmarried Men in America*, which Quadrangle will be publishing in December and from which the present piece has been adapted.

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an astonishing total of 46.1 per cent of all single men in the Manhattan survey suffer "mental health impairment."

Needless to say, all such surveys are fallible. Studies based on vague criteria of mental health and happiness lack any final authority. But the conclusions of these studies are heavily supported by data from institutions, showing that bachelors are twenty-two times more likely than married men to be committed for mental disease (and, incidentally, ten times more likely to be put in hospitals for chronic diseases).

As far as the society is concerned, however, the main problem of single men is not mental or physical illness, or related afflictions like alcoholism and loneliness. It is not discrimination or poverty. It is not that thriving old specialty of single men and their intimates: venereal disease. Single men have another way of getting the rest of society, however reluctantly and unconsciously, to take part in their problems. That way is crime.

It is by now well known that about half of all violent crime is committed by and against blacks. But the central facts about crime are not racial; they are sexual. Groups of sociologists venturing into urban streets after their seminars on violence in America do not rush to their taxis fearing attack by marauding bands of feminists, covens of single women, or angry packs of welfare mothers. Despite all the movies of the *Bonnie and Clyde* genre, and the exploits of the Symbionese Liberation Army, one need have little fear of any group that so much as contains women—or, if the truth be known, of any group that contains men who are married to women. Crime, like poverty, correlates better with sex and singleness than it does with race. Although single men number 13 per cent of the population over age fourteen, they comprise 60 per cent of the criminals and commit about 90 per cent of major and violent crimes.

Summing it all up, then, violence and crime join with mental illness, mild neurosis, depression, addiction, venereal disease, institutionalization, poverty, unemployment, and nightmares to comprise the specialized culture of single men in America. Not surprisingly, the climax of the grim story is death. Of all groups, single males have the highest mortality rate—and suicide is increasingly the way they die. Suicide is not restricted to young single men, however. In fact, after the perilous early twenties, the older a man gets without marrying, the more likely he is to kill himself. In addition, there are many forms of suicide that are listed under other names. Single men have almost double the mortality rate of married men and three times the mortality rate of single women from all causes: from automobile accidents and other mishaps, as well as from the whole range of conventional diseases. Most of the illnesses do not become evident until after age forty-five. Many of them, it is safe to say, represent various forms of disguised or unconscious suicide.

In analyzing the high death rates of single men, sociologists normally focus on the bachelors' lack of the kind of "personal maintenance" married men enjoy from their wives. Feminists talk of the failure of sexist society to teach male children how to cook and take care of themselves. But the maintenance explanations are inadequate to explain the all-encompassing reach of single male afflictions. Altogether the pattern of mortality among single men is so various and inexorable that it suggests an organic source: a failure of the will to live, a disconnection from the life force itself as it arises in society. Discussing the high suicide rates of single men throughout Europe in the 19th century, Emile Durkheim wrote: "The bond attaching the [single] man to life relaxes because that attaching him to society is itself slack."

Perhaps the most dramatic evidence of the literally vital importance of the marriage tie to men is the impact of its rupture by divorce or widowhood. Contrary to the usual images of the helpless and abandoned wife, the statistics show far greater evidence of helpless and traumatized husbands. The woman tends to suffer most during the separation when the man diverts himself with dreams of bachelor freedom. If she is over forty, she has a much smaller chance of remarriage. But in terms of mental and physical disease and life expectancy, divorce damages the man far more than the woman.

Thus, divorced men are more likely to seek psychiatric help than divorced and separated women, and they can be found in disproportionate numbers in mental hospitals. They are also more prone to profess unhappiness than divorced women. But it is in statistics of disease and mortality that the plight of divorced men emerges most strikingly. According to recently corrected figures from the National Bureau of Health Statistics, divorced men of every age group between thirty-five and sixty-four have a mortality rate three-and-a-third times as high as divorced women.

They die of all causes, but like single men, divorced men specialize in accidents and suicides. Divorced men are three-and-a-half times as likely as divorced women to commit suicide, and four times more likely to die in an accidental fire or explosion. Murder claims three divorced men for every divorced woman, as does cirrhosis of the liver. And, in the realm of more conventional mortality, divorced men are six times as likely as divorced women to die of heart disease.

In short, when a man, accepting an honor at the company banquet—or prefacing a book—gives much of the credit to his wife, he is not merely following a ritual. He is stating a practical fact.

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In overwhelming likelihood, he would not have succeeded—and possibly not even survived—if he had been single or divorced.

But statistics are treacherous. Perhaps all these weaknesses of the single and divorced are the cause rather than the consequence of their marital failures. The man with a criminal bent or a proneness to mental illness is admittedly a poor prospect for marriage and a good one for divorce. Perhaps the man who falls off cliffs, or crashes his automobile, or drinks to excess, or takes addictive drugs, or fools around with guns, or inclines to suicide, or becomes depressed and unhappy and neurotic—even late in life—perhaps these men also, in one way or another, selected themselves out for successful marriage.

It is possible to explain by the process of marital selection all associations of divorced and single men with mortality, insanity, and criminality —and the associations of married men with longevity, success, and equanimity. It is possible to contend that these statistical relationships have little to do with the comparative healthiness of single and married life or the deep psychological need of men for women. But these explanations create more problems than they solve. The idea that most singles are inherently unmarriageable and the divorced unstable fails to explain the same pattern of afflictions among widowers. It fails to explain the absence of comparable patterns among single and divorced women. And the marital selection theory fails to explain the mechanism whereby many of the symptoms that supposedly prevent marriage do not appear until after many years of singleness. In addition, the impact of marriage on character is not merely a statistical conclusion. One does not have to look far to find examples of buccaneer singles transformed by marriage or to find examples of once stable men plunged into depression and drink by widowhood or divorce.

Other skeptics ascribe all the problems of divorced men to the removal of "personal maintenance." But this theory fails to explain why the pattern affects the rich, who can have servants, as well as the poor, who cannot, and affects the young and the old, from all parts of the country and from all industrial societies where statistics are available.

In the elaborate studies by John Bowlby on attachment and loss in small children in all human societies, in recent evidence that lack of "social involvement" is a key to mental illness, and in the endless annals of the literature of isolation, everywhere we discover that the finding and losing of love are central to human experience. It should not be surprising that divorce is a deadly event for men. Men are usually the most active partners in the finding of love, and they are most likely to lose everything, even the children, when love is lost.

But what about the "sexual revolution"? Has it not made life easier or more pleasant or more exciting for unmarried men? There too the answer would seem to be no.

One source of information on these matters is a volume entitled *Sexual Behavior in the 1970's*, written by Morton Hunt, which presents the results of an ambitious national survey conducted by *Playboy* in 1972 with the assistance of the (Kinsey) Institute of Sex Research. Author of several previous books on sexual behavior, Hunt analyzes the new findings and compares them with the results of the two Kinsey Reports (1949 and 1954) and with other surveys of sexual conduct. What Hunt finds is that even in the realm of sex, single men do less well than married men. Though single men are more promiscuous, they also have less total sexual experience than monogamous men (or women). In the younger age groups single men only have about one-fifth as much sexual activity as married men of the same age, and less than half as much sexual activity as single females. Single men are also less successful on the "inner scoreboard"—women's orgasms (the rate of failure here being five times higher than in marital sex). But single men do rate higher on one sexual scale: being more promiscuous, they are more prone to venereal disease than married men or single women.

As to the image of the single male as playboy and swinger, it has at best a coincidental relation to reality. There are such creatures, but they are generally powerful and rich and successful beyond the dreams of the vast majority of single men. Nor do the playboys represent the only ascendant style of American malehood in a time of "sexual revolution." Recent research offers startling evidence of a sexual crisis among young men, marked by sexual fragility and retreat. A *Playboy* survey of college students in 1971 indicated that while virginity among girls was rapidly diminishing, virginity among boys was actually increasing, and at an equal rate. Greater female availability and aggressiveness often seem to decrease male confidence and initiative. Further evidence of such retreat comes in the form of impotence, now the leading complaint at virtually every college psychiatric clinic. One psychiatrist, citing evidence from "my patients, both male and female, articles in medical journals, and conversations with my colleagues," calls it "the least publicized epidemic of the last decade."

As an additional grim entry on the sexual scene —to go with the playboys and the impotents—we have an expanding number of rapists. Although dignified married men with high status in their communities receive the most publicity, rape is another specialty of single men with confused sexual identities. Proportionately, a single man is about five times as likely as a married man to be convicted of rape. The reported incidence of this crime increased almost 80 per cent between

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1968 and 1974, and the real incidence probably increased also.

We have, then, the playboy, the impotent, and the rapist as an unholy trinity of single manhood. To be sure, they comprise, when taken all together, only a minority of all single men; they are the most conspicuous winners and most abject losers of the "sexual revolution." But they play a much larger role in the consciousness of our time than their numbers warrant. They offer the appeal of demonic darkness, as strong as Gatsby's orgiastic light itself, to those who gather on mountaintops and dream of the end of sexual rules and limitations: the end to monogamy.

The dream of liberation from monogamy emerges in a chorus of influential voices. They speak in terms of "freedom" and "fulfillment." Books like *Beyond Monogamy*, magazines like *Playboy*, organizations like the Humanists and the Sexual Freedom League, all present themselves as embattled "liberals" confronting a powerful and reactionary establishment. The sexual liberals purport to be the "open," the "creative," the "genitally liberated" facing the "repressives," the "paranoids," the "anal compulsives." The liberals are against power games and for the sharing of love. They are for "universal kinship,"in Alex Comfort's phrase, and equality.

Why then is there such a disparity between this hopeful vision and the reality of the single "liberated" life? The reason is that the removal of restrictions on sexual activity does not bring equality and community. It brings ever more vicious sexual competition. The women become "easier" for the powerful to get—but harder for others to keep. Divorces become "easier"—but remarriage is extremely difficult for abandoned older women. Marriages become more "open"—open not only for the partners to get out but also for the powerful to get in.

MONOGAMY is central to any democratic social contract, designed to prevent a breakdown of society into "war of every man against every other man." In order to preserve order, a man may relinquish liberty, prosperity, and power to the state. But if he has to give up his wife to his boss, he is no longer a man. A society of open sexual competition, in which the rich and powerful—or even the sexually attractive—can command large numbers of women is a society with the most intolerable hierarchy of all. In any polygamous society some men have no wives at all; denied women and children, they are in effect deprived of the very substance of life.

Monogamy is egalitarianism in the realm of love. It is a mode of rationing. It means—to put it crudely—one to a customer. Competition is intense enough even so, because of the sexual inequality of human beings. But under a regime of monogamy there are limits. One may covet one's neighbor's wife, one may harbor fantasies of teeny boppers, but one generally leaves it at that. One does not leave one's own wife when she grows older, to take a woman who would otherwise go to a younger man. Thus a balance is maintained and each generation gets its only true sexual rights: the right to a wife or husband and the right to participate in the future of the race through children.

It is not a ruthlessly strict sysem. Many divorces occurring among the young are relatively harmless. There is a place in the system for some philandering. But the essential rules are necessary to a just and democratic society. A breakdown in the sexual order will bring social ills and injustices far more grievous than the usual inequalities of money and power.

Such a breakdown is already occurring in American society. The most obvious evidence is the ever-growing number of older divorcees. Between the ages of forty and sixty-five, there were 1,600,000 divorced women in 1973, up 231,000 since 1970, while there were only 935,000 divorced men. The divorced men, moreover, were remarrying over three times as fast as the divorcees. This disparity is caused by a fundamental inequality between the sexes.

Unlike divorced men, most of whom find wives within a few years, women over forty only rarely remarry. The median age for these divorced women was approximately forty, while the median age for the women whom the men took as their second wives was about thirty. A woman divorced after forty—after her child-bearing years—is most likely to spend the rest of her life unmarried. Although women in general can bear singleness far better than can men, this huge number of divorcees is a national tragedy.

A society is an organism. We cannot simply exclude a few million women from the fabric of families, remarry their husbands to younger women, and quietly return to our business as if nothing has happened. What has happened is a major rupture in the social system, felt everywhere.

Older divorced women are not the only victims of this rupture. The other victims are young single men. When the divorced men marry young women, the older men, in effect, become polygamists. Each man monopolizes the fertile, eligible years of two or more women. The inevitable result is that millions of young single men cannot get married or have children.

Between twenty and forty, there are 1,250,000 more single, separated, or divorced men than single, separated, and divorced women. When the million or so divorced and separating men between forty and fifty-five enter the fray—to remarry women with a median age in their low thirties—the strains are intense. Eighty-five per cent of the women between twenty-five and forty are already married. The ones who are single in

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many cases are not eager to get married or are unlikely prospects for some other reason. Many single women over thirty have prestigious jobs and are unwilling to marry less successful men. Thus the field for the single men is diminished still further.

The overall result is sexual pressure on most men and most marriages. It is sexual turbulence and struggle extended throughout the society. It is fatherless children and childless fathers. It is a rising incidence of homosexuality, a frequent recourse of marginal males in polygamous societies everywhere. Above all, the result is an abundance of losers, men and women lost in the sexual shuffle and relegated to the singles game, in which almost no one wins.

So few win because the losers in the "sexual revolution"—post-forty women and young men—cannot marry each other. The divorced women are too old and the single men too young. Although women's magazines have recently begun entertaining their readers with happy stories of sex between these two available generations, the cases of marriage are extremely rare, except possibly in show business, where it was ever thus. The few marriages that do occur between young men and older divorced women, moreover, do not often bring children or real family responsibilities. The young man is only technically married.

The fact remains that young men almost always marry women of child-bearing age. By and large, single men of all ages fall in love with young women. When they fail to find young single women, they prospect among the married ones. If they fail here, they do not get married at all. It is the same with older divorced men. They will often marry a much younger woman before a woman their own age or older.

Throughout human evolution the competition among men has focused on fertile women. That is the very essence of the male sex drive. Outside of literature, men are not usually attracted sexually to women whose age reminds them of their mothers. Even when children are not consciously sought, men are most attracted to women who can bear them; and children are still a vital, if often unconscious, motive of marriage.

THE chief beneficiaries of the "sexual revolution," therefore, are older, married men with exceptional appeals and powers. They can leave their older wives and marry younger ones. In addition, powerful men can have young mistresses, thus monopolizing two young women. These forms of polygamy create a large number of peripheral males who cannot win a durable relationship with a woman and whose existing ties are always in jeopardy. As in a baboon troop, the powerful get the women most of the time; and the powerful father most of the children.

It is then that the peripheral men feel sexually expendable. But unlike the peripheral baboons, who are physically controlled by the dominant ones, the peripheral men are not powerless. They can buy knives and guns, drugs and alcohol, and thus achieve a brief and predatory dominance or an illusory potency. The rapist, the addict impotent, and the playboy, in a way, become equals.

It should be remembered that the real arenas of "sexual revolution" in America are not the universities, but the black ghettos. Although statistics are not available for the ghetto itself, the overall black totals are heavily influenced by ghetto conditions. Thirty-nine per cent of all black men are single, compared to 27 per cent of white men. Only 52 per cent of black children under eighteen are living with both parents, down 7 per cent in three years, to a level 35.8 points below the white percentage. Black women, through jobs and welfare, tend to be financially independent of the men. In the ghetto, divorce and desertion are more common than anywhere else in the society, and sexual competition and bravado are inevitably pervasive.

But the ghetto does not provide a secure place for the losers, a secure haven of love and self-esteem. Because the ghetto often cannot enforce monogamy or perpetuate marriage, most older ghetto women lack husbands. So half the violent crimes in America are committed by and against ghetto residents. So rape and impotence, addiction and robbery all too often cast a pall over the streets and homes. Even though there are many reasons for the ghetto tragedy—both in our history and in our current policy—there is no doubt that this tragedy has now assumed the bitter pattern of sexual emancipation. It is the losers' side of the "sexual revolution." People who would like to extend the pattern to the rest of the society should study it well. (They also might study the Moslem world and other polygamous societies, whose characteristic features are the suppression of women and the emergence of large numbers of homosexuals.)

The sexual revolutionary, with his talk of love and sharing and universal kinship, sounds like a rather conventional utopian: sentimental but harmless, and with his heart in the right place. In fact, however, the sexual revolutionary is more dangerous than most, because his program is at once less realistic and more feasible. Unlike the economic or political utopia, the sexual one can be practiced in one's own home. But also unlike the economic or political utopian, who at least gestures at realities of scarcity and interdependence, the sexual revolutionary rarely transcends the closed world of his own imagination. In theory, his program is utterly misconceived, and in practice it is evil.

Any Communist, for example, knows that equality takes work, power, even dictatorship. He has no illusion that freedom alone will achieve it.

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But to the sexual revolutionary it goes without saying that people become equal merely by taking off their clothes. It is a surprising variation on the theory, never really believed even by its proponents, that "they're all alike in the dark."

Yet the descriptions of swinging in a book like *Beyond Monogamy* offer abundant sociological data, for those who reject the evidence of their own lives and senses, that sexual appeal is no more equally distributed than anything else. One might go further. Sexual appeal is distributed with an unevenness more inexorable and irreversible than almost any other human advantage—perhaps even more than intelligence and virtue, certainly more than money and power. On the most obvious level, older men are much more powerful sexually than older women, and younger, fertile women are much more powerful sexually than younger men. But inequalities in sexual appeal are great among men and women of all ages.

Monogamy is designed to minimize the effect of such inequalities—to prevent the powerful of either sex from disrupting the familial order. In practice, however, the chief offenders are older men. Young women, however powerful sexually, do not normally want to exercise their powers to gain large numbers of partners. And in fact, female resistance to the more flamboyant manifestations of sexual revolution has been repeatedly demonstrated. Attempts to promote communal sex usually leave women cold. H. Wayne Gourley, for example, established "Walden Two" as a utopian community in Pennsylvania partly to experiment with group marriage. But in the end he had to leave the group, selling them his house. The experiment failed, according to Kathleen Greibe's report, because "There has never been a female at Walden House who had any interest at all in group marriage." This is not surprising. The anthropologists tell us that there has never been any group of women who have long permitted a regimen of group sex. Group sex has occurred chiefly when powerful men have enforced it.

Any sexual revolution, therefore, will tend to liberate more men than women. Larger numbers of men than women will command two or more exclusive partners. Thus a sexual revolution will exclude many more young men than young women. In addition, any older woman with a sexually attractive husband is likely to be deserted. When the society stops enforcing monogamy, a social order based on monogamous families will break down into a system based on the bitter hierarchies of sexual power.

Such disasters of sexual inequality explain why real egalitarians, even revolutionary ones like Fidel Castro and Mao Tse-tung, are normally conservative about sex. They do not want to liberate its disruptive and hierarchical potentials. That is why libertarians, who even want to turn the police force over to private enterprise, hesitate to extend *laissez faire* to sex. That is why the program of the sexual revolution—with its promised link of freedom and equality—is even more fatuous, more quixotic, than any of the long procession of egalitarian dreams that have bemused this century's politics. Sexual liberals and revolutionaries are anything but egalitarians. They are just men with sexual ambition or dreams of orgiastic glory.

WHAT happens when sex is liberated is not equality but a vast intensification of sexual competition, from which there is no sure haven except impotence and defeat; competition in which marriage is just another arena, or the home base from which the strong deploy; competition in which the only sure result is an ever larger band of vindictive losers.

In some societies, losers do not matter very much. They can be sent to rest homes and asylums, dispatched to distant wars, or thrown in jail. But the success or failure of a peaceful democratic society is dependent on what happens to the people who lose. That most people can live with sexual "liberation" may in some sense be true. But what is also true, and more to the point, is that such "liberation" makes criminals out of many men and deprives even larger numbers of men and women alike of the essentials of human dignity and love.

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The Problem of Kenneth Clark

Hadley Arkes

KENNETH CLARK has been so frequently celebrated in public that one scarcely knows by now just which of his burdens may be more difficult for him to bear—the weight of his collected honors or the authority that has been settled upon him by the gracing touch of officiality. For a long time Clark has professed psychology at the City University of New York, but his career was launched on a larger public stage some twenty years ago, when he was called in as an expert witness in the litigation surrounding *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. That case involved, of course, the challenge posed against the policy of assigning students to separate schools on the basis of race. When the Supreme Court reached its decision in *Brown*, it declared that segregated education was "inherently unequal" even if the facilities in the separate schools were essentially comparable, and it claimed that its finding in this respect was "amply supported by modern authority" in the field of psychology. Where the Court found this "authority" most importantly was in a statement that Clark had drafted for the Court, and among the references it cited, the most prominent place was given to one of Clark's own publications.

For Clark, this was the moment when his voice, decisively, carried; and with this kind of recognition he was, in effect, "established" by the Supreme Court. A host of other honors quickly followed, and Clark became the black social scientist most thoroughly recognized by institutions outside the black community. He was made a member of the Board of Regents of New York State, a member of the Board of the Rand Corporation (in New York), and a trustee of the University of Chicago. He was named a consultant to the State Department, to publishers, corporations, and educational institutions; he was installed as president of the American Psychological Association; he was placed on the boards of the most influential foundations; and along with everything else, he has been covered many times over with honorary degrees. Hardly a grant may fall to earth, it seems, without his knowledge; hardly an event may take place in the black community without the benefit of his interpretation. In short, he is the one whom the New York *Times* calls first when anything of consequence occurs in the black community, and on more than one occasion he appears to have called in the *Times* himself when he has had something important for the community to hear.

In his latest book,* Clark is pleased to tender, once again, some things useful for the public to hear, and he is willing to lay them out with a full hand, with none of those petty reservations that may be the mark of a small nature. George Eliot once wrote of a character in one of her novels that he particularly enjoyed his occasional visits to the local billiard hall, where he could "taste the old flavor of discourse about . . . things in general, considered from a point of view which was not strenuously correct." And now, after a steady career of writing reports on research and offering projects to society for its better ordering, Clark too has allowed himself a certain release from the meaner forms of strictness and restraint. He has given us, as it were, a collection of his papers and speeches on the road. The occasions for these papers are often public and ceremonial—e.g., Clark's receipt of an honorary degree, his inauguration as president of the American Psychological Association. They are moments when a tremor of style is expected and one might feel freer to speak in a more personal vein, without footnotes or shadings. One need not feel any special strain on these occasions to render a perfect justice to those with whom one disagrees—for Clark, men like Daniel P. Moynihan, Edward Banfield, Christopher Jencks, David Armor, Daniel Bell, and Nathan Glazer—and so Clark strikes out then in rather unmeasured assaults on what he calls a "new breed of social science mercenaries." Some, he says, "will be flagrant and direct in their for-hire role in exchange for rewards of prestige, publicity, and power." Others will take a slightly different route and become "polysyllabic apologists for the status quo."

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* *Pathos of Power*, Harper & Row, 179 pp., $7.95.

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Was Bruno Bettelheim somewhat reserved about the studies claiming to show that the separation of students by race brought about damages to personality? Well, it merely confirmed for Clark that "those who attempt to use the methods of social science in dealing with problems which threaten the status quo must expect opposition and even retaliation." Of the substance of Bettelheim's criticism Clark says nothing; for some reason his disposition has been to believe that anyone who indulges a measure of doubt about the arguments he has put forward under the mantle of social science must either feel personally insecure at the prospect of social change or must be opposed to the advancement of blacks.

None of this, of course, is much better or worse than the kinds of things we have come to expect now in our public discourse, and we might be inclined then to take in these essays with a fair sense of the occasions that produced them and simply read Clark here with a proper discount.* And yet, even though many of these papers are affected with a political flavor, they are not so widely different in tone or content from the most important pieces that Clark has written over the years. Those other works have not generally been distinguished, in their bulk, by a concentration on hard research; they have not shown any inclination to deal in a more careful and sensitive way with the arguments of others; and they surely have not displayed any larger measure of judiciousness or sobriety in their treatment of evidence. These are not, as flaws go, very far out of the ordinary in political men. But Clark has prided himself on being something quite different from the typical public man, who shapes his language and his character to the idiom of the streets. In speaking of the Negro intellectual, Clark has warned that

> he cannot confuse his role with that of the politician or the mass leader. He cannot hope to be successful by imitating or adopting their techniques or their slogans. He certainly cannot appeal to the man in the street through the uncritical use of slogans, emotional phrases, and other devices which have been found effective in arousing the emotions and allegiances of the crowd. . . .

Clark's own claims to leadership rest, as he has made clear, on his credentials as a social scientist —as a man who would bring to questions of justice certain skills of analysis, certain qualities of reflection and understanding that have been cultivated best in a career of scholarship. The plain question, though, is: How good has that social science actually been? Clark has staked his position in public on his record as a social scientist who has sought to reach, with his science, to the most important questions; and it is on the strength then of that record that his claims must finally be judged.

WHEN Clark was called in as a consultant in *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, he was asked to offer what evidence he could on the point that racial segregation might be the cause of psychological damage to Negro children. With the help of two other colleagues, he reviewed the literature in social psychology, and he drafted a short summary report that was eventually signed by thirty-two other colleagues in the social sciences.

In no instance, precisely, were Clark and his colleagues able to pick out a study that tested the effects of segregation on the educational performances or disabilities of black children. Nevertheless, he and his colleagues offered their professional opinion that segregation was likely to produce psychological damage in Negro children. When the Court reached its decision in *Brown* and claimed the support of "modern authority" in psychology, it drew most importantly on the report that Clark had drafted. Of the six references that the Court made to research in psychology, five had appeared in the bibliography that Clark and his colleagues had attached to their statement, and the first item cited by the Court was one of Clark's own publications. That was a report Clark had written for a White House conference on children,† and it was the principal work that he had leaned on himself in composing his statement for the social scientists. But that work, in turn, was largely another survey of the literature in the field. As far as original research went, there were only a few papers by Clark that were listed in the bibliography, and there was only one project of Clark's own undertaking that was mentioned in the body of the report. Once again, though, that work, brief as it was, became the pivot that governed the direction of the entire report.

The research that formed the basis for Clark's findings, and which he was able to pyramid into a national reputation, came down, finally, to five short papers that he and his wife, Mamie, published between 1939 and 1950. They were, on the whole, modest affairs. The earliest three in particular were rather unmatured works, and the Clarks came to express their own reservations about the precision and conclusiveness of these

* This volume contains, after all, the modest proposal that stunned Clark's colleagues in the American Psychological Association when he sprung it on them in his presidential address—viz., that in order to prevent the "absurd and barbaric use of power," those men who would aspire to positions of national leadership and the control of nuclear weapons should be subjected to "the earliest perfected form of psychotechnological, biochemical intervention." Some of these essays, clearly, are even more bizarre than their occasions warranted.

† "Effect of Prejudice and Discrimination on Personality Development," prepared for the Mid-Century White House Conference on Children and Youth (1950); revised and reprinted in *Prejudice and Your Child*, Beacon Press (1955 and 1963).

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studies.* It was in the two papers published much later that the Clarks reported on the project that would turn out to be the most important for them in the testimony for the Brown case.†

The Clarks focused in their study on a sample composed entirely of Negro children who ranged in age between three and seven. A little more than half of them were in segregated nursery and grammar schools in Arkansas, while the remainder were in racially mixed schools in Springfield, Massachusetts. In one test the children were given four dolls that were identical in every respect except that two were brown with black hair, while two were white with yellow hair. In the questions that followed, an effort was made, first, to determine whether the children understood that the dolls represented separate races, and then to elicit from them some indication of their own preferences. The children were told to give the investigator the doll: 1) that they liked to play with or liked best; 2) that was a nice doll; 3) that looked bad; 4) that was a nice color; 5) that looked like a white child; 6) that looked like a colored child; 7) that looked like a Negro child; and 8) that looked like themselves.

In a second part of the study, children were asked to color in a set of line drawings that included a boy, a girl, a leaf, an apple, an orange, and a mouse. Each child would color the mouse first, in order to establish that the child had a reliable sense of color. After that initial screening, the children were asked to color the boys or girls the color that they themselves were, and then, on a fresh set of drawings, to color them the color that "you like little boys (or girls) to be."

In the coloring test, very high proportions of the children from ages five through seven identified themselves as "colored" (the range extended between 80 and 97 per cent), and there were no significant differences between the children in Northern and Southern schools. A somewhat lower portion, though (72 per cent), recognized the brown doll as "Negro," and for some reason an even lower proportion of the children in the doll test (66 per cent) identified themselves with the colored doll. But the more interesting results arose out of the expressions of preference. In almost all age groups, and in both regions, the preferences ran strongly in favor of the white dolls. Overall, 67 per cent preferred to play with the white dolls; 59 per cent thought the white doll was the "nice" one; and 59 per cent thought the colored doll looked "bad." There was a tendency for these preferences to drop off gradually in each age group after the age of four, so that, by the seventh year, quite as many of the children favored the colored as favored the white doll.

But if the differences became blurred eventually among the age groups, they began to sharpen when the sample was divided by region. A larger majority of the children in the North tended to favor the white dolls (72 per cent, as opposed to 62 per cent in the South); but while even the children in the South were inclined toward the white dolls, they were much less disposed at the same time to reject the colored ones. (Seventy-one per cent of the Northern children thought that the colored doll looked "bad," while only 49 per cent of the Southern children shared that view.) The differences were even more pronounced when it came to the coloring tests. When asked to fill in the drawing with the color they preferred little boys or girls to be, 70 per cent of the Southern children showed a preference for brown, while only 36 per cent of the children in the North expressed that preference. Forty-four per cent of the Northern children conveyed a preference for white, while that choice was registered by only a quarter of the children in the South.

When the children were asked about their reasons for rejecting the colored doll, two of the children in the South remarked " 'cause he is a nigger." It was rare that anyone said that the colored doll was "dirty"; most of the children spoke, rather, of the prettiness or ugliness of the dolls. Still, many of the children were evasive in their answers, and in some cases they were clearly strained by the prospect of defining their racial character and connecting themselves, explicitly, to a color. As the Clarks reported, "two children ran out of the testing room, unconsolable, convulsed in tears." In the Northern group, a seven-year-old with light skin tried to explain that he was actually white, but that he had received a heavy suntan in the summer. The gesture merely confirmed, though, for the Clarks, the things that the boy already knew. By the age of five, they concluded, most Negro children could not escape a realistic sense of their own racial character, and they had absorbed the notion that to be colored in America was the mark of an inferior status.

BUT THEN to what, exactly, did these findings point? There was the need, said the Clarks, for "a definite mental hygiene" and a program of education that would "relieve children of the tremendous burden of feelings of inadequacy and inferiority." There was no mention here of integration of the schools as the remedy for the problem that was disclosed in the

* See "Segregation as a Factor in the Racial Identification of Negro Pre-School Children," *Journal of Experimental Education*, vol. 8 (1939), pp. 161-63; "The Development of Consciousness of Self and the Emergence of Racial Identification in Negro Pre-School Children," *Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 10 (1939), pp. 591-99, especially p. 597; and "Skin Color as a Factor in Racial Identification of Negro Pre-School Children," *Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 11 (1940), pp. 159-169, especially p. 168.

† "Emotional Factors in Racial Identification and Preference in Negro Children," *Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 19 (1950), pp. 341-50; and "Racial Identification and Preference in Negro Children," *Readings in Social Psychology*, ed. T. M. Newcomb and E. L. Hartley (1947).

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study, and the omission was not inadvertent. What the study suggested most strongly was that black children esteemed themselves less for their blackness; and in that want of esteem, that sense of being stamped instantly with a lesser worth, one may indeed find a certain burden or injury, especially for younger children. But in all strictness, the Clarks had not established in their own study that the schools were the principal (or even an important) source of those things in the society that inculcated in black children an awareness of inferior standing; they had not shown that these attitudes of the black children were in any way related to disabilities in learning; and clearly they had not demonstrated that the injuries were likely to be redressed through the racial integration of the schools. In fact, if the injury were shown in the tendency of black children to reject their blackness, then it was the children in the North, in the less segregated settings, who had exhibited these injuries to the greatest degree.

It was not until after the *Brown* case had been settled that Clark took note of this embarrassment in the data—this discrepancy between the thesis he had been arguing and the evidence that had allegedly supported it. On the surface, he allowed, the evidence might indeed suggest that black children in the North suffered the greatest injuries; but that interpretation, he insisted, was "superficial." The fact that black children in the South did not reject their own color to the same degree as black children in the North did not mean that the children in the segregated schools had escaped injury:

> The apparent emotional stability of the Southern Negro child may be indicative only of the fact that through rigid racial segregation and isolation he has accepted as normal the fact of his inferior social status. Such an acceptance is not symptomatic of a healthy personality. . . .

This was, several years before *Catch-22*, a minor advance on the times. The Negro child showed injury to his personality either way—if he rejected his color or if he accepted it. This kind of flexibility might be quite admirable at times, but it only raised here a serious question about the grounds on which the decision in *Brown* had been justified. In the statement that Clark helped to draft for the social scientists, the explicit emphasis was placed on "enforced" segregation. Clark and his colleagues professed to speak only in relation to that kind of segregation that "results from or is supported by the action of any official body or agency representing some branch of government." It was one thing if private citizens brought about a pattern of racial separation through a host of private, uncoordinated acts; but it was far worse when the state took up that practice of exclusion, raised it to the level of principle, and then held it up to the public with the force of law. In the *Brown* case, the comment was made by the federal appellate court in Kansas that "The impact [of segregation] is greater when it has the sanction of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group." The court went on to argue that "a sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn," and this theme was picked up quite readily by the Supreme Court. But in the light of the evidence that the Court had available, that was a rather speculative point. It could hardly compare in its firmness, or in its elementary force as a constitutional point, with the recognition, established in common understanding, that a separation of races ordained by the state placed the stamp of inferior rank on a whole class of citizens. That understanding had been put forth nearly sixty years earlier by the first Justice Harlan in his dissenting opinion in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson*, the case that was finally overruled by the Court in the *Brown* decision. As Harlan wrote: "The arbitrary separation of citizens, on the basis of race . . . is a badge of servitude wholly inconsistent with the civil freedom and the equality before the law established by the Constitution." In view of the Constitution, he said, "in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens."

Clark's writings, then, were largely irrelevant or unnecessary to any judgment that the Court was in a position to reach in the *Brown* case. One could understand, of course, why the Court might have been anxious, in this very important case, to reach out for any shred of testimony that was sympathetic to its course. But if the judgment of the Court had really turned on anything as contingent as Clark's empirical findings, it would have been open at any time to revision as soon as someone came forward with findings that ran in the other direction. The decision would have been imperiled, for example, as soon as one discovered a group of black students who had gone to all-black schools, but who had suffered no manifest injury to their self-esteem or to their capacity to perform academic work. The claims of the Negro children in the *Brown* case had more to do, finally, with the conditions of their citizenship than with any statistical patterns that showed up from time to time among black students.

As we noted earlier, Clark and his colleagues had insisted in the *Brown* case that they were not strictly "concerned with such segregation as arises from the free movements of individuals." And yet, along with many others, Clark began to interpret the *Brown* decision as though it had done far more than forbid a state to establish in public law a separation between the races: he came to read the decision in later years as though it had actually mandated the presence of blacks and whites

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in the same schools. One moved on then to the use of compulsory process in order to insure that any school had enough whites or blacks to offer meaningful integration or to avoid, as the saying went, racial "imbalances." But what proportions were adequate? Was the goal 50-50, 60-40, 70-30? The decision in *Brown* furnished no guidelines here, as indeed it could not.

The closest thing we have to evidence on this point came with the famous Coleman report and the re-analysis of the data that was carried out later at Harvard. As David Armor reported, in comparing standard tests, in none of the schools surveyed in the Coleman study did the average of blacks in black schools exceed the average of blacks in schools where the black enrollment was between 1 and 25 per cent.* Of course, all of this is affected by the likelihood that blacks in predominantly white schools have a somewhat higher social standing than blacks who attend predominantly black schools. Beyond that, there is a good deal that is problematic in starting out from these findings toward conclusions in constitutional law. Still, Clark had used data of this kind in the past; they did seem to support, in their tendency, a policy of integration; and therefore it is interesting that Clark held back from using these data, because he resisted the conclusions that came out of the Coleman report. The Coleman report found that while certain attributes of the schools, such as the "verbal ability" of teachers, could be important in accounting for the gains of black students, they were not nearly as important as the class backgrounds of the other students in the school. The sense arising here was that black students from lower-class backgrounds could benefit substantially from being placed in a setting in which most people around them would reflect the motivations and aspirations of the white middle class.

To Clark, though, that represented the theory of "cultural deprivation"—that black students could advance only if they were thrown in with whites and exposed to a culture of "achievement"—and he sharply rejected that inference. He was inclined, too, to think that so-called "compensatory or educational enrichment programs" were merely parts of the "related technology" of the cultural-deprivation theory. He was more convinced now than ever that the real fault lay in the "efficiency" and commitment of the schools themselves. The schools in New York, for example, had been dominated by teachers and administrators who lacked empathy for black children and who simply assumed at the outset that these children were marked for failure.† The importance of integration now for Clark was that, in putting whites in the same classrooms with blacks, it would elicit a certain seriousness and effort on the part of teachers that black students alone were not likely to see.

CLARK'S conviction on this point has been grounded in a syllogism of sorts, or a turn of reasoning, that is at best embarrassing, and which any social scientist adorned with civility as well as competence will probably refuse, out of politeness, to believe that he meant. In *Pathos of Power,* Clark argued that the relatively weak performance of black children in the schools was due mainly to the schools themselves, and that assessment was confirmed, he thought, by:

> 1. The concretely demonstrated psychological fact of the normal curve in the distribution of human intellectual potential, personality characteristics, motivation, and other personal characteristics believed to be related to academic performance.
> 2. The modifiableness of human beings.
> 3. The fact that normal human beings who are taught, motivated to learn, expected to learn, and provided with conditions conducive to learning, will learn up to or near the limits of their capacity.

The argument moves in this passage in a misleading way, by softly juxtaposing two separate meanings of "normality"—the normality of curves or statistical distributions, and the normality we usually have in mind when we speak of "normal" human beings. To the statistician a "normal" distribution is a special kind of smooth, symmetrical curve, which represents the frequency with which certain traits appear in a population. If we assume, for example, that the size of feet is "normally" distributed, we would expect, say, among women, that the largest number would have sizes around seven and eight, and that we would get a peak somewhere in that region in a curve drawn from one end to another along the scale of sizes. We would probably find then that the curve tapers off as we move, on the one side, toward sizes that are smaller than five or six, and, on the other side, through sizes that are larger than nine or ten. This is the configuration, roughly speaking, that we usually describe as a bell-shaped curve. There is far more to it, of course, than that, and those people who work seriously with statistics have something very precise in mind when they speak of "normal" distributions. It is quite different from the sense of "normal" as we use it in our ordinary language to designate

* See Armor in Mosteller and Moynihan (eds.), *On Equality of Educational Opportunity,* Vintage Books (1972), p. 197.

† It was observed in *Youth in the Ghetto* that "Public school teachers in New York City come largely from the city colleges, which have a dominant pupil population from a culture which prepares the child from birth for competition of a most strenuous type. . . . The competitive culture from which the bulk of the teachers come, with the attendant arrogance of intellectual superiority of its members, lends itself readily to the class system within the school, . . . which in effect perpetuates the academic preeminence of the dominant group" [p. 202].

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things that conform to a typical or usual pattern. The difference in meaning is not to be treated casually, and it can be disregarded only at the risk of fostering some serious confusions.

In Clark's case, the initial mistake is worked into a larger pattern of misdirection. For one thing, it is not quite a "demonstrated psychological fact" that certain characteristics related to academic performance are distributed "normally" in nature. What has been demonstrated, rather, is that we have the means of contriving standard tests (for IQ's, for example, or verbal ability) that will yield "normal" distributions. Distributions of this kind may facilitate comparisons among people who take the tests, and for some of the purposes they are designed to serve (such as making selections within a pool of applicants) they are not wholly barren of value. At the extreme ends of the distribution—among the best, that is, and the worst—the discriminations may even be reliable enough to put one's money on. But these tests or measures could be fashioned just as easily to produce a "bimodal" distribution —that is to say, a distribution with two peaks or centers—as they could to produce a curve that bulges in the middle.

Yet even if it were true, as Clark says, that the qualities associated with academic performance were distributed "normally" within the population, it still would not follow that the people we refer to as "normal" human beings would arrange themselves, in their academic performance, in a "normal distribution." The sweep of the normal curve takes in the rare and extreme cases as well as those cases that cluster near the average. Even if we defined "normal" human beings as those that fall within a certain distance from the mean on any given matter, it is not clear why those people cannot be divided, say, for the most part, between two or more dominant centers. For example, even if we assumed that the population in the public schools were composed entirely of "normal" children, it could still be, in some places, a highly polarized population, which consisted predominantly of the very smart and the very dull. Children could arrange themselves in a normal distribution without marking any particular progress in education; and if they did not happen to line up in a normal distribution, it would still not be apparent on its face that the schools were more responsible than any other agency in determining the way in which the students were finally distributed in their test scores. The wit of the children themselves and the influence of their families may have their own, irreducible roles to play in these outcomes. If this is still a somewhat tricky matter to absorb, that may be due in large part to the fact that it does not arise in public very often. Those people who understand the technical meaning of a "normal" distribution are not apt to confound it with the distribution of "normal" human beings; and still less, of course, are they likely to make that jumbling of the two a foundation of their public policies.

But even if we put aside all these churlish considerations—even if we allowed Clark to rest secure in his conviction that the principal trouble lies in the poor performance of the teachers—the issue, when cast in those terms, would still not have anything to do with integration. There were other means of searching out people who were genuinely interested in working with black students, and if the central problem were really "empathy," an economical strategy would have been to recruit mainly black teachers for the job. That may account, in fact, for the encouragement Clark offered to the movement in New York to "decentralize" the schools, and it may also explain the support he gave to the governing board of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville district during the late 1960's in its fight with the teachers' union. In the prospect of placing the schools under the control, at all levels, of black leadership, he apparently found the promise of a more "empathic" regimen for black children. But the schools under decentralization did not spur any dramatic gains for black students, and Clark grew disenchanted with the way in which the scheme lent itself to the intrigues of local politicians. That was an outcome, however, that anyone with political sense was able to foresee, especially if he knew anything about the history of decentralization in the schools of New York City. But whatever the hopes that were held out in the plan of decentralization, it should have been evident that, from the logic of its structure and the spirit of the men it was bringing forward, the one thing it had no promise of furthering was racial integration.

More recently, Clark has come out again for extensive busing in the New York schools for the sake of achieving full "desegregation." By desegregation he now means a ratio of blacks to whites in each school that matches the ratio of blacks to whites in the school system as a whole. As things presently stand, that would mean a white minority of about 33 per cent within each school. But of course there is not the slightest evidence to suggest that proportions of that kind would have any particular educational value; and to argue for the creation in each school of a racial composition that reflects the system as a whole is to drift into the most serious deception yet. For on the one hand it would promise, as the badge of its soundness, the results that would in fact occur if pupils were distributed among the schools in a thoroughly color-blind way. But on the other hand, it would seek its ends through a system of assignment that was based explicitly on race, and which had to be repugnant therefore, at its root, to the firmest principle that came out of the *Brown* case.

For the most part, then, Clark seems to be an-

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imated in his public moves by the simple recoil of his disappointments over one scheme or another, and by a notable want, on his own side, of political insight or prudence. But prudence in its proper sense depends on the perception of right principle, and the very source of Clark's problem is that, twenty years after the judgment in *Brown,* he has still not been able to settle on the reasons that explain that original decision, or to set forth in a plausible way the design of education that it ultimately commanded.

For Clark, it was the disinterest of the social scientist, as well as his knowledge, that comprised his claim to lead. But Clark has warned, more recently, too, that "scholarly objectivity" must not fall into the kind of detachment that fosters "moral relativism." That is to say, it must not slide into the persuasion that judgments over values are essentially matters of the most subjective, personal taste, and that they can be valid therefore only in relation to the person or culture that accepts them. And yet, in the writings he has diffused to a larger public, Clark has shown, in fact, a very pronounced strain of moral relativism. Quite apart from the flashes of rhetoric, Clark has preserved at critical times a posture of neutrality in relation to some of the most important questions that are raised in the black community. At precisely the moments when he has had the chance to teach, he has left us in doubt as to how seriously indeed he is willing to commit himself to the understanding that a certain kind of life—certain patterns of obligation and restraint, even certain modes of making a living—are not merely adaptive, but in some decisive sense better. The ambivalence that Clark has shown, in principle, on this question has affected in yet another way the analysis he has drawn about the central problems of the black community.

Clark's most important statement on the condition of lower-class blacks in the cities appeared in 1965 with the publication of *Dark Ghetto.* That essay centered on Harlem, and it extended the analysis that was put forth a year earlier in *Youth in the Ghetto,* which was published under the auspices of Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (HARYOU). Clark was, at the time, the acting chairman of the Board of Directors of HARYOU, an organization that was set up as a possible agency for the anti-poverty program, and one gathers that he was also the principal author of this major report. A few years later Clark was commissioned to study the "community action programs" that were established under the war on poverty in twelve cities. It was his claim that the "community action programs" owed their inspiration to the design that was set forth in *Dark Ghetto,* and his assessment of the results appeared in 1969 in *A Relevant War on Poverty,* produced in collaboration with Jeannette Hopkins.

As one moves through these works, however, the sense of the main problem becomes elusive. By 1969, Clark and Hopkins played very strongly on the powerlessness of the poor—by which they meant, at various times, either the distance of the poor from political power or the inability of the poor to bring about a dramatic change in their lives. But by the end of their study, the authors became convinced that the poor were incapable of exercising power on their own. If anyone did have the skills that were needed to organize a community and move it coherently toward a common purpose, he was not very likely to be poor. Politics could certainly be used as a means of mobility and a source of income, but any group that was sufficiently cohesive and disciplined to make its way in politics was likely to make its way in private business as well. By and large, it appeared, people were poor for reasons that had little to do with their hold on political power.

As they went on, then, Clark and his colleague became far less certain as to what the strategy in the war on poverty actually was, and so instead of evaluating the programs, as they were charged in their commission to do, they simply told their assistants in the field to rank the programs in the twelve cities by any criteria they separately chose. As it turned out, many of the rankings were similar, but they were based, it was clear, on reasons that were inconsistent, and the result was to render the conclusions unavoidably suspect. The authors finally commented, as if in passing, that "It remains, nonetheless, a relevant and important challenge in social analysis to determine the specific factors or pattern or combination of factors which would help in differentiating between anti-poverty programs that work and those that don't." At this moment of high reflection it seemed to escape their notice that it was for that job, after all, that they had already taken the money. This was, as we used to say, good work if you can get it.

It was arguable, of course, that poor blacks were poor because they lacked money; but they were poor, more fundamentally, because they had been subjected to systematic patterns of discrimination and because they were concentrated in places that were virtual breeding grounds, as Clark said, of social "pathologies." This was the "ghetto," as Clark understood it, as an enveloping culture of poverty and a powerful force in itself of social disintegration. It was a place characterized by extraordinarily high rates of homicide, drug addiction, venereal disease, illegitimacy, and the break-up of families.

Clark believed that some of the more destructive tensions in lower-class life could be abated, the pattern of social "pathology" could be broken, if the society offered greater means for the male in the ghetto to prove his manhood by sustaining a family. In that way, he suggested, one might undercut the transient sexual relations and the

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casual breakdown of families that become marks of virility and male power. Who is to say that an argument of that kind does not carry some truth? But then the question one has to ask is: Why should the breakdown of families have continued apace and even increased in the 1960's when blacks were making notable gains in employment and mobility, and when the means of sustaining a family had improved considerably? Clark himself conceded that the roots of these "multiple pathologies" did not lie primarily in unemployment; "in fact," he wrote, even "if all of its residents were employed it would not materially alter the pathology of the community." Nor did the source of the problem lie in the frustrations of bad housing. Housing could indeed raise morale, but still, he argued, it did not necessarily affect the more fundamental attributes of economic status, broken homes, and lower aspirations.

But once we have acknowledged these places where the evidence becomes equivocal, it becomes ever more reasonable to consider that many of these "pathologies," such as illegitimacy, may be affected at least in part by the moral conventions or the culture of the local community. In that case, it would not be unrealistic to suppose that these problems may be compressed or enlarged in some degree by the local climate of opinion and the things that public men teach. A leadership that sought to restrain problems like illegitimacy would be compelled then, in the first instance, to affirm something in public about the superior dignity of that way of life, of those habits of obligation and commitment, that have been identified more widely as "middle class."

And yet that is an understanding that Clark seemed to find too embarrassing or too impolitic to join. As one would expect, he was not more anxious than anyone else to condemn sections of the black community; but whatever the motive, his inclination was to hold back in a posture of detachment. Instead of commending the character of middle-class life, he observed that middle-class communities simply had different pathologies of their own—more "alienation," perhaps, and suicide, and different forms of crime ("white-collar crime," for example, like embezzlement)—and he professed himself to be uncommitted on the question of whether one set of pathologies was really any better or worse than the other. Yet Clark did suggest that blacks should exchange the pathologies of the ghetto for the pathologies, say, of the suburb—"because," he said, "the middle-class culture, whatever its frustrations, still remains the norm for personal achievement of the 'good life.'" It would appear then at best to be a matter of aligning oneself with the conventions that seem to be necessary for success in this society. As Clark has written in another place, the values and standards of the middle class "may be worth having and are saleable in the larger society, which is dominated by the middle class." And there, one infers, is the long and short of the matter.

In the slack of this kind of detachment, a clever man may begin to discover one or two saving points in any number of things that have borne, perhaps all too unevenly in the past, the reproach of common opinion. Clark suggests, for example, that there is something to be said at the margins even for illegitimacy for the sake of understanding it a bit better:

> In the ghetto, the meaning of the illegitimate child is not ultimate disgrace. . . . The girl loses only some of her already limited options by having an illegitimate child; she is not going to make a "better marriage" or improve her economic and social status either way. On the contrary, a child is a symbol of the fact that she is a woman, and she may gain from having something of her own. . . . [There is a] desperate yearning of the young for acceptance and identity, the need to be meaningful to someone else even for a moment without implication of a pledge of undying fealty and forgiveness [*Dark Ghetto*, pp. 72-73].

Against the mitigating tones of this portrait, there comes to mind very crisply one of the interviews that were taped with residents of Harlem and reproduced in *Youth in the Ghetto*:

> Now some guys that walk around and say, man, well I knocked this chick up, and now I'm putting her on the welfare, and I knocked this chick up and now I'm putting *her* on the welfare. You know, some of these guys, there's a name for them, they call them the home relief pets, you know, the home relief pets, and all he does is goes around whenever the check date comes up he goes around, you know, and he gets so much from each one of the women, and he shortens the money [Man, about 27 years of age].

One might almost suggest that Clark had become a kind of "polysyllabic apologist for the status quo" in illegitimacy. And yet no one who has reviewed his writings can be left with many doubts on the matter of his feelings, overall, about illegitimacy. He would have the problem dissolved, and he would count a reduction in the rate of illegitimacy as one clear sign of improvement in the condition of the black community. But at some point one's unweighted feelings will simply not be good enough. When it becomes evident, for example, that problems such as illegitimacy and drug addiction will not yield to the application of social-welfare measures alone, our willingness to consider other measures of public policy will depend on the gravity with which we regard these problems as real *problems*. The call for a remedy, after all, implies a wrong to be corrected, and it is a matter of some consequence, then, that as Clark comes to the point of judgment over policy, he comes also to weaken in his

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surety that there is anything, really, in problems like illegitimacy that strictly deserves condemnation. And so, in *Youth in the Ghetto,* Clark and his colleagues finally came to the judgment that, while many of these "pathologies" were serious, they were not serious *enough* to warrant any special emphasis in a remedial policy. It was their estimate that an emphasis on " 'building a better life' for the unhappy young people in question . . . is more likely to accomplish desired ends than too narrow a concern with the [problem at hand], be it gang fighting, drug use, or unwed motherhood."

But as Clark himself has recognized, problems like the instability of families or the epidemic of drug use may acquire a momentum of their own, and they may persist in the face of rising employment. In fact, the relation to unemployment may even be the reverse of what has often been expected. It may be rather hard to induce a young man who is unskilled to accept a legitimate job paying about $100 a week when he can make far more than that selling drugs on the street. Once again, Clark did not have very far to look for some fairly vivid testimony. In one of the interviews reported in *Youth in the Ghetto,* a "warlord" in one of the few active fighting gangs was asked why he did not "go downtown and get a job." He laughed at the man who asked the question and said:

> Oh, come on. Get off that crap. I make $40 or $50 a day selling marijuana. You want me to go down to the garment district and push one of those trucks through the street and at the end of the week take home $40 or $50 if I'm lucky? Come off it. They don't have animals doing what you want me to do. . . . I'm better than an animal, but nobody protects me. Go away, mister. I got to look out for myself.

It is a reflection of the times that we have come to need economists to convince us, with arcane formulas and statistical correlations, that potential criminals are indeed influenced by the relative costs and benefits involved in choosing illegitimate over legitimate occupations. One hardly gets the sense, though, in Clark's writings on the ghetto, that law enforcement may ever have even a marginal relevance in restraining some of those problems that concern him. Clark's disposition on these matters was brought out rather clearly on the question of heroin. In *Youth in the Ghetto,* Clark and his collaborators spoke sharply of the "degradation" that came along with addiction to hard drugs. But apart from recommendations for psychological counseling and some hints of vigilante action in the neighborhoods, the authors strongly preferred the possibility of legalizing the use of heroin and morphine. It was their hope that, by removing the legal penalties, they would reduce some of the excitement that made these drugs more attractive, and that the problems of crime would recede if one did away with the laws that "created" the crimes in the first place.

By this stratagem, of course, one could "solve" the problems of crime that surround prostitution, the numbers racket, and a variety of other local industries that feed into underground networks. But we have an ample fund of evidence by now in matters ranging from gambling and abortion to the regulation of heroin in other countries, and we know enough at least to suggest that the use of heroin will not decline under a program of legalization. Nor, for that matter, will the structure of illegal operations disappear. The general tendency of legalization is to encourage an expansion of the practice that was formerly constrained, in large part, simply, because the legal restrictions have been removed, but also because the moral inhibitions have been swept aside from things that were previously regarded as forms of "vice." These activities are likely to expand then far beyond their present level, until they consume a larger portion of the resources of the community and draw off people and investment from other callings. The question for anyone who would offer policies to the black community is, How would one regard the prospect of that expansion? Would it be, in general, a good or bad thing for the black community if, thirty years from now, it continued to have a disproportionately large share of the addicts and pimps and numbers runners, and a disproportionately small share of skilled workers, doctors, and professional men? Even if the standard of living had gone up markedly—as it would—would one be willing to say also that things had "improved" in the black community?

If that seems, to Clark, one of those hopeless metaphysical questions that no one, ultimately, can judge, it is nevertheless a question that must be faced daily, in a more personal way, by parents in the black community. In this respect, there was a suggestive account three years ago in the New York *Times* of how the police managed to uncover a massive narcotics operation that centered on Pleasant Avenue in Harlem. At the height of its activities, the business was described as a "multi-kilo a week operation," and in tracing out the network the police had the benefit of some extraordinary intelligence. They were given important names and addresses; they were told how the heroin was being distributed to western Harlem, the Bronx, and New Jersey; and they were even told where the heroin was hidden in particular shops that were used as "covers." The information was furnished at some risk by the father of a young man whose friends were deeply involved in the operations, and who had been urging him to come in with them as a courier at $3,500 a week. From all we could imagine, the offer must have been nearly irresistible when set against the alternatives, say, of going on with

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school and establishing oneself in a respectable situation. At some point, apparently, it was clear to the father that the only way he could stop his son from throwing in with his friends was to take the steps that were necessary to destroy the narcotics ring itself. And with that in mind, he finally went to the police.

If Clark cannot say, *in principle,* that legitimate occupations are generally better, in themselves, than things like peddling drugs or running numbers; if he has some trouble saying that a family life based on commitment and preserved at certain weak moments by the additional supports of law is generally better as a context for raising children than the conditions of illegitimacy—then he has nothing to say, really, to those people in the black community who are every day making the decisions that are truly important. And for those who would make the right decisions, even when it means at times running against the current, he is a source of no support.

In *Dark Ghetto,* Clark recalled his involvement with what was referred to as "the Group," a small band of educated blacks who were prominent in government and the professions. They were brought together by their interest in politics and the affairs of the black community, but after a while they began to lose heart over their own lack of influence; their morale began to ebb until, finally, it seems, they drifted apart as a group. At some point it must have occurred to these men that their own legitimacy was suspect because they were not, after all, just like most Negroes in their educations, their professions, or their styles of life, and so they did not represent the community in any simple descriptive sense. If they had a claim, however, to represent the community in some other sense, that was a case that remained to be made; and it was against that background that Clark came to offer his own brief for the social scientist as a leader of the community.

In the first instance, Clark's case for the social scientist was bound up with what he called the "strategy of truth." By that he meant the systematic analysis of social problems by trained professionals, men who could make use of their knowledge to clarify the facts about our social problems, and in clarifying the facts, sharpen the recognition of our duties. Without the search for truth, he said, "none could proceed toward democratic ends." In this perspective, the power of the social scientist seemed to be predicated on his ability to offer reasons—or "give an account" of himself—to the people he would represent. But that argument had to give way eventually to the "realism" Clark affects about the character of public life, and to the hard estimate he has made of how much, in politics, the art of giving reasons is really worth. As he has written most recently, his inclination now is to believe that "the acceptance or rejection of [the] facts, knowledge, advice [of the social scientist] is determined by the degree to which these are compatible with the prevailing power-determined point of view." The "strategy of truth" has receded, then, as a realistic matter, and it has been replaced in Clark's writings by a rather different theme.

In *A Relevant War on Poverty,* Clark and his colleague recalled a "poor people's convention" held in Washington in 1966, which broke down into a carnival of meanness and disorder. Sargent Shriver walked out, saying that he would not "participate in a riot," and Roy Wilkins called it a spectacle of "self-degrading bad taste and language." The authors thought, however, that the judgment was too harsh, and they offered in a gentler way that "The language of the poor and their representatives is likely to be more direct, blunt, and accusatory. The etiquette of indirection, circumlocution, or equivocation does not seem to operate for the poor in their communications with officials." What they went on then to suggest is that "this lack of ability [on the part of the poor] to make contact with power sources dictates . . . their need for surrogates"—that is to say, "professionals who have the training and skills to identify with and to help the poor."

Now it may well be that the higher reaches of business and government contain, in increasing numbers, men who respond readily to the vocabulary of social science. But it may also be, as Clark has suggested elsewhere, that leaders in business and government (men, for example, like David Rockefeller or John Whitney) would simply prefer to deal with men like themselves—responsible, cultivated, educated men—rather than with the grosser variety of streetcorner militants. They may prefer to deal, in short, with men like Kenneth Clark.

Clark has settled in quite comfortably now with this second argument about the mission of the social scientist; but as he has done that he has grown ever less disposed to meet those requirements he set forth himself for the social scientist, and which establish his legitimacy, as a "surrogate," for the community he would presume to lead. He has not been particularly fastidious in dealing with evidence; nor has he addressed himself in a patient and demanding way to the grounds of principle on which his own teachings rest. These failures remain in the end the enduring source of Clark's problem as a social scientist and as a public man.

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Beggar Moon
A Story

Allen Hoffman

THERE are too many threads. That's obvious. Our suits have too many threads, isn't one always hanging loose? Our days have too many threads. Our lives have too many threads. And stories, the stories most like our lives, certainly have too many threads. This story is about the moon and Bluma the Beggar and it has too many threads. How did I come to meet them, the moon and Bluma the Beggar? They are both Jews. So this is a story about Jews. But it is much more than just a story about Jews; it is a Jewish story. The moon and Bluma the Beggar are not just Jews; they are Jewish. And that's where the threads come in. In Jewish stories, the threads are entangled in the middle. You know the beginning and you know the ending, but you don't know the middle. You see the beginning of the threads, you see the end of the threads, but in the middle, a tangled snarl, an impenetrable mess. The *goyim* have too many threads, too. With the *goyim*, however, things are inside out. You don't know the beginning, and you don't know the end; you only know the middle.

A Jew knows where he came from and he knows where he will go, but, *vey iz mir*, can he get crazy in the middle! A *goy* has no idea where he came from or where he is going, and he couldn't care less, but he knows where he is now. He's relaxed. He's calm. Why shouldn't he be? It's a *goy*'s world. And when a Jew makes it big, he's not relaxed, calm. Look at Henry Kissinger. The man runs around like a *meshuggener*. He'd better. It's a *goy*'s world. What does Kissinger own? Nothing. He is no different from the little Russian violinists from Odessa who stood next to the Czar. Even worse, when the *goyim* tire of Kissinger's tune, he won't even be able to play weddings and Bar Mitzvahs. Nothing is new; the threads reach into eternity. And with Kissinger we know his beginning. He's in the oldest Jewish profession: an *aytza gibber*, a *dray kop*. Détente, big deal! Abraham tried to negotiate détente for Sodom and Gomorrah. And what was the result? Lot's wife: The SALT Talks. A master negotiator, a big deal! When the Jews crossed the Red Sea, G-d opened his hand in mercy and the Jews passed miraculously through the surrounding sea. Under that outstretched hand a whole nation nudged, "*Nu*, so what's in the other hand?"

Yesterday Kissinger was a refugee and tomorrow he will be a refugee, but today he is a citizen. It's no surprise that he is Secretary of State. Who can be better at the present than the Jew? The present is defined by the past and the future. The past and the future mercilessly drive the Jew into the present. The fugitive Jew must outwit his captor, a hostile present—or become a slave. A few *goyim* may flee their pasts and dash into the present. But the future? What is that to a world-owning *goy*? No, the Jew has all the advantages. Who but Disraeli could master the present? Fleeing the past and future, what choice did the poor man have but to become Prime Minister of England?

What does this have to do with Bluma the Beggar and the moon? They were my teachers. They taught me about the threads—Jewish threads. And I'm not a very quick student or I would have learned it long ago, just by looking down at my *tzitzes*, the fringes on the corners of my spiritual serape. A Jew looks at them and they remind him of the Commandments. Look at the *tzitzes*. You can see where the threads begin. You can see where the threads end. But who can comprehend those remorseless knots and mad twinings that occupy the middle? Only He who created them. And what if He isn't talking? I looked down, but I didn't see. I had to wait for the moon and Bluma the Beggar. Let me start at the beginning —that I know, or, at least, I think I do.

ROSH HASHANAH is the day of judgment. Whose judgment? Ours: yours, mine, everybody's. You don't want to go into court unprepared, so you begin preparing the month before. How do you prepare? Prayer, penitence, and charity avert the evil decree. They say that even the fish in the water are afraid in Elul, the month preceding the Day of Judgment, shouldn't you be? What can you do in that month? Prayer is too difficult. You have to believe, really believe, and you have to concentrate. How you have to concentrate! If you do it right, it might transform your existence, but it would probably ruin your whole day. It's one thing to pray, but to Pray—talking to G-d all the time could mess you up. To

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seek a little refuge is one thing: Ten, two, and four, a little spiritual Dr. Pepper; to fall into a bottomless pit is another. Penitence is fine if you don't like who you are. For a minor job, it's a great nuisance. And for a major job, why bother? If you really don't like yourself, why worry about what's going to happen to a creep like you? The only thing left is charity. What else is there?

Charity is a difficult task. The recipient is not to be embarrassed. He should receive it anonymously. Proper charity is not an easy thing at all. In fact, charity is a misnomer. In Hebrew, it is called righteousness, which, as the name implies, is not just a hand in the pocket, but a heart and head in heaven. Nonetheless, righteousness can still be charity, a coin in the cup. Who knows if poor prayer is prayer? Who knows if poor penitence is penitence? But give a poor person money, and that's charity. Definitely. And thank G-d, too. Where would we be without it? Prayer and penitence make for a dull world, whereas through charity you can meet some pretty interesting people.

In the awesome month of Elul before Rosh Hashanah, I was attending the morning prayers regularly. I'm not saying it helped, but did it hurt? What should I do in the mornings of Elul, watch the *Today* show? Do they ever blow the *shofar* on the *Today* show as a little Rosh Hashanah warm-up? And there's another difference. Barbara Walters couldn't care less about me. At the *shtibl,* I help make a *minyan.* The Off Track Betting Corporation opened up an office around the corner on Broadway and we still have the best numbers game in town. Will we or won't we hit ten? And, finally, a *minyan.* "Oy, a *minyan,* pray, pray!" We have the hottest game in town even though the betting parlor has dozens of *minyans* who arrive early, stay late, and donate regularly. Cash, too. None of this ten-dollars-anonymous stuff. If the *shtibl* were the Off Track Betting parlor and the Off Track Betting parlor were the *shtibl,* the Messiah would come, because everybody would be hitting the triple: a *minyan* in the morning, a *minyan* in the afternoon, and a *minyan* at night. How could the Messiah stay away? But the Messiah hasn't come yet, and with action like that in the *shtibl,* how could I stay home and watch Barbara Walters interview a man who teaches dogs to dance? At the *shtibl* I am admired —if I am one of the first ten. At the *shtibl,* I am loved—if I am the tenth. At the *shtibl* I am admonished—if I am late, eleven or higher. But that's the chance you take. You can't race without finishing out of the money occasionally. It's the best game in town. Did Secretariat ever give anyone a glass of schnapps for his father's *yahrzeit*? And his father was a somebody, Bold Ruler.

The action, however, occurs at the beginning of the service. By the time the final *Kaddish* has rolled around, it's out the door, get a paper, a cup of coffee, and off to work with the reproachful call of a poorly blown *shofar* pursuing me. During one such hasty exit, I met Bluma. She sat in the back at the bare *kiddush* table. A dark wooden cane rested against her leg. She was lost in reverie. As I approached, however, she snapped out of it and stood up.

"My dear man, can you help me for Rosh Hashanah, the New Year?"

She had a supplicating tone, but the major tone was one of inquiry. I gave her a dollar.

"G-d will bless you."

"G-d bless you, too."

"You'll see," she insisted.

THE average gift in the *shtibl* is fifteen cents to a quarter, but everyone gives. How can we not? There are so few of us; we barely have a *minyan.* The poor woman has been waiting. And sometimes she really must wait. We start later than other synagogues when we start on time, and most of the time, we only start looking for a *minyan.* And then we have to pray; there is, after all, a reason why we go through all this. So by the time the poor get to us, they have put in a hard day chasing after the more punctual and populous. Can you imagine what Elul must be like for those genuinely poor people, screaming about Rosh Hashanah and streaming from one synagogue to another with the interminable still-born wail of the aborted *shofar* calls assailing them all over the West Side? It's a wonder they bother to come to our *shtibl* at all. So I gave her a dollar. I never give enough charity anyway. The checks never get written. Like the *shofar* blasts, they come out only for Rosh Hashanah. Yes, of course, I'll give. It's a worthy charity . . . before Rosh Hashanah.

I went out the door as she remained at her post. I had gotten a good look at her. Gray hair closely cropped into short tufts gave her strong round face a mannish look. The plastic-rimmed glasses she wore did not detract from this impression. Nor did the neat, short-sleeved khaki tunic. Under the tunic, a simple dress. A clean, uniformed appearance. But Bluma wore something striking which both enhanced and enlivened the sense of uniform. She had on long, bright red socks originating somewhere in her low-cut white tennis shoes and terminating just below her knees. Yet it would be misleading to think that from the waist up Bluma suggested a Foreign Legion sergeant and from the waist down a utility infielder for the Boston Red Sox. No, from head to toe, it was all Fenway Park. The dark heavy cane angled casually into her haunches the way old sluggers, the true students of the game, lean on their sacred allies around the batting cage, while inside at bat some young kid mercilessly tears at the ball with his impersonal stave, using only his lower nervous system. Great reflexes, but no glimmering that hitting is an intellectual art and a social one; be good to your bat and it may be good to you. Even

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Bluma's eyeglasses seemed oddly reminiscent of baseball. And so did her stature, too small for her size. Not stocky, although she was, so much as the suggestion that she might have been bigger. And, too, she might have been better, or at least more successful. Although her career wasn't going to put her into the Hall of Fame—someone else in her family had made it. Who else could she be? Oh, those Red Sox! How could I not be taken with a beggar who looked like Dom DiMaggio? Barbara Walters—feh! feh! feh!

So I left the *shtibl* with a light, airy feeling: Rosh Hashanah at Fenway Park with a good, a very good, an excellent—but not a great—cantor in center field. Let the Young Israel, the Jewish Center crowd have Yankee Stadium with the world-famous, nonpareil, *vunderbarisher* cantor, Joltin' Joe DiMaggio, the fifty-six game angel, chanting under the pagan, funereal monuments. (This stadium made possible through a generous donation of the Sultan of Swat.) You don't want to look too good on Judgment Day, the Judge might get suspicious or jealous. Better a smaller scale with a little intimacy, a crummy Fenway, where fans attend for only one reason, love. And when G-d looks down hurriedly (He has to look everywhere on Rosh Hashanah), our good deeds can fill the *shtibl*'s small room. In Yankee Stadium our good deeds wouldn't make it to left-center field, much less to the monuments. And in the Jewish Center, they would smolder restlessly below the stained-glass windows. And you don't want to leave all those stains uncovered on Rosh Hashanah. If it weren't for crime in the streets, it would be theologically sound to squeeze a *minyan* into a telephone booth for Rosh Hashanah. Stuffed with good deeds, crammed with prayer, and direct dialing yet. Yes, Fenway Park for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; Yankee Stadium for Hanukkah and Passover.

THAT's how I met Bluma. It was a Tuesday. The following Tuesday I looked up from my prayers to see her sitting at the empty table by the door. I got up and walked over to her. As I began to reach in my pocket, she waved me off.

"Finish praying first. It's good for you."

I returned and finished praying. On my way out, I gave her a five-dollar bill. She took it and began to thank me, but as she drew it closer, she suddenly stopped.

"Hey, this is a five-dollar bill. You know that?"

"Yes, it's for you."

"You sure?"

"Take it. It costs a fortune to make Rosh Hashanah . . . chickens, wine, fish. . . ."

"I don't eat all that stuff," she said, but she put it into her pocket. She looked back up at me.

"Say," she said, "you should have a happy New Year."

"Thank you. You, too."

"Don't worry about me. G-d is good." She paused a moment. "Say, are you married?"

"Yes."

"Your wife should have a happy New Year."

"Thank you."

"Any kids?"

"One."

"Your baby should have a healthy New Year. Healthy, that's the main thing."

"Thank you."

"Is it a boy baby or a girl baby?"

"A girl."

"Don't feel bad," she commiserated. "Maybe the next one will be a boy."

"Be well," I said as I went out the door.

I descended to the street and had gone a few steps when I heard a voice calling, "Say! Say, you!" I turned around. Bluma was at the top of the stairs, her red socks reverberating in the clear morning light.

"Be well, too," she called. "And be careful!"

The following Tuesday, again Bluma in the red knee socks. Bluma, however, is not the only individual who needs the help of the community. Some come more regularly, some less regularly. We get a mixed crowd: men, women, observant, unobservant, old, not so old. Why not? Along with the individual donation, the *shtibl* contributes institutionally. On the table where the Torah is read, stand several *pushkes,* alms boxes. The two are complementary. What is Torah if not righteousness? The largest silver-colored alms box goes to our own local poor. Mr. Isaacson enthusiastically dumps the entire contents into the outstretched hands. Some don't even wait for Mr. Isaacson. It's their money, isn't it? Why should they wait for him? No one dropped a coin into the box just to hear a clink or a clank. Mr. Isaacson lets them take. It is theirs. He lets them take —unless there are others who are entitled as well. Then it must be divided equally, and no thief Fagin ever trained could beat Mr. Isaacson to the *pushke.* Mr. Isaacson has good moves and, more important, great recovery. When his prayer shawl hoods his head, his phylacteries entwine him in holiness, and his whole being Prays, yes Prays; let someone surreptitiously and unfairly lift the *pushke* and Mr. Isaacson comes from nowhere to put a firm, guiding hand on the *pushke.* Jangling and unplundered, it returns to the table. It makes no difference whether Mr. Isaacson must come from behind, go over the top, or dart in from the side. Mr. Isaacson touches only the *pushke,* never the person. Touching the man would be a two-shot foul since you really cannot blame the poor cadger; he has to eat too. It's a game attempt; it's a clean block. No score; no foul. Isaacson is a defensive specialist. He never offends. The Bill Russell of the National Pushke Association. And Mr. Isaacson always enjoys the home court advantage. Drive on Russell in Boston? Empty a *pushke* on Isaacson in the *shtibl*? You've got to be kidding!

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That Tuesday someone was kidding. He's always kidding. Sometimes he kids that he's blind, sometimes lame, sometimes deaf. A real sense of humor! Mr. Isaacson had him covered before the *pushke* started to move. Bluma was waiting patiently in the back by the door. Mr. Isaacson gave the culprit a dirty look. This fellow has *chutzpah*. When he feigns blindness—white cane, cup, sigh, and all—on tht IRT, he never even bothers with the local, only the express! I should see as well as he does. He begs real bread for imaginary children. He poses with bandaged hands, broken arms, crutches. You name it, he has faked it. No shame whatever! A scandal. But he gets. Not from me, but from Mr. Isaacson and the others.

"Mr. Isaacson, did you ever see him as a blind man in the subway?"

Mr. Isaacson laughed. "And he doesn't even need eyeglasses like you and me."

"Why give him anything?"

"Just because he's not blind doesn't mean he's rich, does it?"

He didn't need from me. The morning service, *Shachris*, ended. The phony started his routine as everyone wound phylacteries and folded prayer shawls. I headed for Bluma.

"*Good morning, how are you today?*"

"Fine, how are you?"

"Thank G-d," she answered.

Why hadn't I thanked G-d? I offered her another five-dollar bill. She wouldn't accept it. I insisted.

"No, no, it's not right," she protested.

"Why not?" I queried.

"You can't afford it," she said mercilessly.

"How do you know I can't afford it?" I demanded.

"You're not rich," she stated with such conviction it was almost a taunt.

I was amazed that she wouldn't take my money. A beggar not taking a five-dollar bill! What was the world coming to! I thought her obstinacy might be caused by my appearance. Sartorially, I am the Jackie Robinson of *Shachris*. I broke the color line: I wear blue jeans. I also broke the collar line: I can't believe that G-d turns away because in 90-degree weather I wear a polo shirt from Alexander's.

Indignantly I asked, "You think I'm not rich because I don't wear a coat and tie and my hair is too long?"

Bluma's eyes grew fiery with frustration. I had offended her.

"You're not a hippie. I can see that."

"Then how do you know I'm not a rich man?" I demanded, my voice rising.

Bluma practically rolled her eyes in frustrated horror at my obtuseness as I stood there proferring the five-dollar bill. Then she stared directly into my eyes with what I was to come to know as one of her use-your-head looks.

"Because you give and the rich don't give!"

What could I say? She had proved her point. I was overwhelmed. So I said nothing. I felt a little foolish. That always happens when I try and do a *mitzvah*, a good deed. I had embarrassed Bluma. I should have known that an old Jewish woman who travels the synagogue circuit dressed like Dom DiMaggio would not be a stickler for style.

GENTLY pushing my money away, she said softly, "Save it. You might need it, too."

What could I say?

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Bluma."

I decided to tell the truth.

"Listen, Bluma, you're right. We're not rich."

"See," she gloated, "I could tell. Bluma knows."

"Yes, but I never would have offered it to you if we couldn't afford it."

Then Bluma was a little perplexed.

"If you don't take it, Bluma, I'll have to find someone else to take it."

"You sure? You wouldn't be tricking me now?"

"No, I promise you. I brought it for you. Please. . . ."

"Only if you're telling the trute." Bluma isn't *too good with "th."*

"I am."

She accepted it. As she put it into her pocket, who came running our way, but the phony. He's blind on the subway, but in the shadows of the *shtibl*, he can identify a five-dollar bill at a hundred paces. He came dashing down the corridor. As he approached, he simultaneously increased his speed and his suggested ailments. His pumping legs fell lame, his eyes grew dim, his shoulder sagged, his back buckled, his arm slackened, and he hurtled forward! Bluma and I sensed we were watching medical history. Another twenty yards and approaching the speed of sound, he would have buried himself alive. No mean feat. In spite of what we know about him, we were awed by such a performance. How Isaacson beats him to the *pushke* is beyond me! The joker slammed on his brakes. He didn't waste any time.

"A little bread for the children. Oy, a little something?"

After a performance like his, even I was inspired. I became a disciple and played dumb.

"Oy, a little bread for the children," he moaned.

"Okay," I said to Bluma, "be well."

"You be well," Bluma responded.

"Oy, the children aren't well and no medicine. A little bread at least." He paused and then took up his wail, "G-d should curse anyone who would let a sick child starve."

The fire returned to Bluma's eyes. All the DiMaggios have been dynamite in the clutch. Waving her cane, she stepped forward. And from there, it was all Elijah and the Prophets of Baal. And the Prophets of Baal were even blind to what they could see.

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"G-d should bless you." Bluma raised her voice.

"A curse on a man who lets the innocent starve."

"G-d bless you and your wife!"

"Oy, letting children die. Letting a baby die!"

Bluma screamed, "G-d bless your baby! The baby should be healthy, that's the main thing."

"No bread for a baby. A curse, a curse."

Bluma still staring at me, asked frantically, "Is it a boy baby or a girl baby?"

"A girl," I answered.

Back on the track, she started rolling now. "A good healthy, happy, sweet year for your little girl!"

"Oy, what kind of year can it be when the Jews let children starve?"

"Feh! Feh! Feh! The devil should starve—but the Jews and your little girl baby should have a good year."

"A curse on such Jews."

"A blessing on such Jews, all the Jews. A curse on our enemies, may they rot."

"Oy, the Jews bring on their own suffering when they are not good to other Jews."

"G-d is good, so are his people. He'll save us. G-d knows the trute! G-d loves the trute! G-d searches for the trute! He knows the hearts of everyone. G-d is good and so are his people and that's the trute. A happy New Year!"

No contest. The phony, uninvolved and unenriched, turned to hustle some other worshipers. What a day for him! The poor faker ran into the Bill Russell of *pushkes* and the Dom DiMaggio of blessings in the same hour. (Could that man field those long, center-field curses and get the blessing back to the infield!) What a day. He turned into a flying pretzel only to smash himself into crumbs against the Western Wall of Bluma's passion.

"A happy New Year," Bluma calmly remarked. "Say, what is your name?"

"Harold."

"Say, Hal darling, I gotta talk to you."

"Bluma, I'm late for work," I begged off.

"Nobody's got time for Bluma. Run! Run! Run!"

"I'll see you Thursday."

"No, Thursday is no good. I gotta go to the butcher. I gotta million things to do. . . . Okay, Hal darling, be well."

When I reached the sidewalk, a voice called after me. "Take care of that girl baby."

As I passed the OTB parlor on Broadway, it looked as if everyone inside were taking the rest cure. Staring at a sheet, what kind of action is that? They don't even see the horses! Maybe one is missing a leg. Every gambler thinks it's his lucky day. How did I know it was my lucky day? The phony one left the field. The blessings remained. Nothing is new. Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal —the mount of blessings and the mount of curses, and as usual the Jews in the middle. It was a heady experience, all right, but I grew up in a family where everybody was always yelling. No, I was impressed by Bluma's *sfora*: you give and the rich don't give. That's a *sfora*, logical analysis! *Sfora* is *kop*, a good mind. Knowledge is power and *sfora* rules the world. The mind is the true reality. It is written, "G-d gave man dominion over all creation," yet the lion is king of the jungle. But only Adam knows why the lion is king, even while he is being eaten. That's *sfora*. I ask you, who is really the king of the jungle? Kissinger. Kissinger is a practitioner of *sfora*. He practices power politics, yet he would get a hernia if he had to carry his own briefcase. Kissinger made it on *sfora*. Not a Jew was at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Not a Jew orchestrated the Concert of Europe. Metternich was there. Talleyrand was there. But not a man understood the score until Henry Kissinger put down his soccer ball and became a professor. Who is really the conductor of Europe? It's nothing new. Look at Einstein, who knew more about the world than any other man. There was a master of *sfora*. Relativity, light, gravity, the atom. He knew it all. Einstein understood how to split the atom, turn matter into energy. Who cares if he had to flee Europe to prevent the Nazis from splitting the atoms of his head on the anvil of Auschwitz? Who is the master of the world? Einstein or Hitler? Einstein—*sfora* rules the world. Einstein is a *kop*, a great intelligence. Hitler was a wolf in lion's clothing. Ah, *sfora*, it is a great consolation for those who don't own anything. What does an animal or an owner have to understand? "Mine" is his total understanding. It's mine: ownership—that's it. Who has to understand? Adam the outcast, the oppressed, the cursed, the poor, the Jew —Kissinger, Einstein, and Bluma the Beggar. Oh that Bluma! The body of a DiMaggio, the head of an Einstein, the heart of a. . . . That I didn't discover until after Rosh Hashanah.

I saw Bluma one more time before Rosh Hashanah. She told me that enough was enough. She couldn't accept any more money from me. And then she told me what she wanted to talk to me about. She was going to bring me a few things—clean, like new—for the wife and baby, too.

"But I don't know about your arms," she said. "Maybe your arms aren't as long as they look."

"Bluma, that's kind, but we don't need anything, really."

"Everybody needs something!"

"Bluma, please don't. We don't need it."

"Don't be stubborn. I don't like it. I'm stubborn; Bluma's stubborn. You'll be here Tuesday after Rosh Hashanah?"

WE MADE it through the month of Elul to that Rosh Hashanah. Had I prepared? A little, I guess. Not enough. We dipped slices from the round holiday loaves into honey for a sweet year. We ate the head of a fish. "May it be G-d's will to make us the head and not the tail." Powerful but perfunctory. Then I didn't

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understand that Jewish fish do not have a middle. Talk about threads! Nor did I understand that *goyish* fish are all middle, without either head or tail. But I shouldn't be too hard on myself. I had prepared, and progress is not altogether obvious at the time. The entire month of Elul, I seemed to hear nothing but mangled, mis-keyed, strangled failures on the *shofar*. How could it be otherwise on the Day of Judgment? But it was. The same man. The same *shofar*. But a different day, and a different sound. A full-throated sound whose staccato cries and low-sighing wails did not assail the ear, but, rather, through the ear infused the listener with the venerable mystery of anguished joy, comforted sorrow, penitence, and hope. The tones are not of the mind. We hear them, but we do not listen so much as we feel them. The *shofar* forms its notes in its own image. The curved creatures invisibly penetrate and hook our hearts. The hooked messengers tug upon our insides to heed the call: their presence and our receptivity. A call from past Rosh Hashanahs: the creation of Adam, the Binding of Isaac, our own actions. A call from future Rosh Hashanahs: the redemption of the Messiah. But the *shofar* curves upward, its mouth to heaven. Talk about threads! The *shofar*'s timeless supplication rises to heaven, where the angels, whose names it is even forbidden to mention, weave the ethereal filament—threads of penitence—into the Holy Veil. Talk about threads! Some threads—the heavenly Garment District.

And the Ten Days of Penitence had fallen, Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur. And the Jews in the middle. Also in the middle was my appointment with Bluma. She sat in the back.

"How are you?" she asked, and without waiting for an answer she continued, "Wait here a minute, I got some things out there in the hall for you. It's not their business. They don't have to know."

BLUMA moved away to take her professional post. As the congregation filed by, she wished each of the *minyan*—"Be inscribed in the Book of Life on the impending Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur." She put the change into her pocket. I offered her a five-dollar bill.

"Will you stop it!" she snapped.

"Here, Bluma, it's before Yom Kippur for me, too."

"You gave and you need it." She looked at me with a smile. "You work and your wife works. She teaches."

Bluma paused to savor my reaction. I was surprised. She smiled widely.

"I've been doing some checking on you. You're not dealing with a fool. Come, I've got some good stuff for you. You'll see about the arms."

We stepped into the narrow hall. Two enormous shopping bags bulged with neatly folded clothes. The two, double-bagged, almost blocked the passage.

"Listen, Bluma, I just can't take this."

"What's wrong with you?" she snapped.

"It's not right."

"Don't you understand? I'm giving *you* something. See! You give me money, right? It comes back at you. It comes back at you, doesn't it? Whaddaya say?"

"It sure does."

"Whaddaya say . . . I'll help you with it. I know it's heavy. I could hardly *shlep* it up on the bus."

"Bluma, where do you live?"

She looked up in aggravation.

"Feh! Feh! Feh! Right away he wants to know where I live. I live. I live. That's all."

"No," I said reaching for the bags. "I'll get them."

As I picked them up, we heard someone coming. Mr. Isaacson had stayed behind to recite Psalms. He clattered down the corridor toward us.

As he approached, she barked at me, "Boy! Help me with these packages!" And as an afterthought: "I have to take them to a poor, old woman."

The sharp command stunned me into my past, and out of a respectful St. Louis boyhood I mumbled, "Yes, ma'am."

Mr. Isaacson smiled as he squeezed past. As I lugged the bags down the steps, I was grateful that I didn't have to *shlep* them up on a bus. I looked over at Bluma hobbling down the hard, stone stairs. Boy, help me with these packages. And I wave five-dollar bills in her face like Yankee Doodle on the Fourth of July. Some charity. Can't I give it in private?

"Bluma, you know this isn't fair."

"Hal darling, what's fair got to do?"

"I gave you a little and you gave me a lot. I have to give you more."

"Now shut up! You don't argue with your wife, do you?"

"Yes," I answered.

"You do? That's no good. She's more intelligent than you. She won't like it."

"She doesn't."

"See! Bluma knows."

We walked up Broadway together. I stopped to turn off at Ninety-third.

"Thank you."

"Be healthy. That's the main thing. There's good stuff in there for the baby. I folded it neatly. I don't know about your arms. You'll see."

"Where did you get so many nice things?"

"Leave it to G-d and Bluma," she beamed.

I left it to G-d and Bluma—and the arms were too long. The only item in both bags for me was a maroon sportscoat. It wasn't bad at all, but I didn't even have to look into a mirror. I knew I was in trouble when the sleeves didn't reach down to my elbows. Nu, G-d and Bluma make better friends than tailors. My wife was amazed to see my bundles. She couldn't believe it. But she couldn't refuse Bluma's gift either, until the roaches walked out. The roaches didn't walk out,

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however, until she already had chosen a green coat for herself and a dark blue pullover for the baby. After the roaches appeared, I had to take the bags down to the basement since nothing, according to my wife, can atone for roaches. Although the little creatures had destroyed much of the charm for her, she was fascinated at my departing to make a *minyan* at 7:30 in the morning and my returning at 8:15 with a pile of used clothes. She saw in this occurrence some strong atavism exhibiting itself. Immediately before Yom Kippur, we called my folks in St. Louis to wish them an easy fast. My wife spoke first and introduced me as the competition. At the end of the conversation I asked:

"Say, Pop, how's business?"

"Slow."

"What's slow mean?"

"Slow means we have a million pounds of used clothes, winter goods, that should be moving by now."

"Yeah, I know the feeling," I said.

Bluma the Prophet. In the first grade, the roving reporter for the *George Washington Bugle* asked me what I wanted to be. "A ragman like my father," I answered, embarrassing the family. You never know when you leave it to G-d and Bluma.

The next time I left it to those two, I found myself in an even stranger situation. Several weeks after Yom Kippur, Bluma announced that she wanted to give me some "nice things." My wife suggested that they couldn't come into the house without her leaving it. "We paid to get rid of our roaches. It's insane to accept hers." She had a point. Bluma said that she was smarter.

"Bluma, I can't."

"Feh! Feh! Feh! Whaddaya mean, 'I can't'?"

"I can't."

"Did I give you good stuff?"

"Yes."

"Did your wife like the coat?"

"Yes."

"Sure. It's a good coat. Wasn't the baby's stuff nice? I folded it special."

"Very nice."

And then she softened, and said quietly, "Hal darling, don't be so proud. It's no good. I know."

I had an inspiration.

"Bluma, I'm not, but it's too far for you to *shlep*!"

"That's the trute," she conceded.

"So it's not fair. We'll manage."

"Are you busy Sunday?"

I trembled. "What time?"

"Any time. How about the morning?"

"I have to take the baby to the park."

"The afternoon then."

"We may have to go somewhere."

"When does the baby nap? She's gotta nap."

"Around one."

"I'll meet you in front of Two-Fifty West Ninety-ninte."

"Is that where you live?"

"Live. Live. Live. That's where I'll be."

That is, of course, where I was. My wife wanted to know why I couldn't say no. I couldn't. And I didn't want to say no. How many people can you respect these days? Very few. Bluma was one. And Elul is only one month of the year. We always need to hear the *shofar* at Rosh Hashanah, but that doesn't mean we should prepare for the rest of the year by becoming deaf. On the contrary, it means that we must prepare by improving our hearing the rest of the year so that we can hear it better. And what was I supposed to tell Bluma? "Happy New Year, kiddo!—See you next time round!" Of course I enjoy Elul. I also fear it. Elul is the homestretch, the final games of the season that can decide a pennant. Elul-Rosh Hashanah-Yom Kippur is the name of the game. Judgment-Atonement-Life. The final games are more dramatic, but all the games count in the standings, even the ones played in April, cold and rainy. And what about G-d? We relax a little after Yom Kippur. Why not? We have to, we're only human, but He's not. Does G-d go to Florida for the winter and the mountains for the summer? Of course not! And there was another consideration. I had started it. I was responsible. I gave her the five dollars. It was my corny Yankee Doodle stunt. I played friend and hero. Didn't she have a right to reciprocate? Couldn't she be a hero and friend? It could come back at me, see! Reciprocity is the trute! How can I give, if I can't receive? Righteousness, like Broadway, is a two-way street. Let it be well traveled. If you can *shlep* it downtown, you can *shlep* it uptown. And anyway, I liked her. And I feared her.

I turned the corner on Ninety-ninth Street and for a moment, I didn't see Bluma. She was almost halfway down the block, seated on a standpipe projecting from the building. If not her residence, at least her office. The bright red of the standpipe perfectly matched her socks. All were the same height, too, as if they were a matched set. Bluma saw me and waved her cane to attract my attention.

"Good. I didn't think you were coming."

"I said I would be here."

She leaned on her cane and stood up.

"Here," she said, "you sit down."

"Oh, no, Bluma, you sit."

"No," she insisted as hostess, "you had a long walk. You must be tired. Sit."

"I'll stand. It's good to stretch my legs a little."

"Sit. You'll see, you'll like it. And I have to get the bags."

I noticed that there weren't any bags. None. Just Bluma and the standpipe, which I now could see was a Siamese fitting; at the top, the seat of Bluma's chair, the pipe branched out into a

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V-shape. I sat down. It was surprisingly comfortable. I leaned my back against the building and relaxed. A little low, but after all, if my arms are too long, why not my legs, too?

"It's nice, no?" she smiled.

"Yes, it really is comfortable."

"When it's hot and the days are long, I like sitting here. It's nice. There's a breeze sometimes."

"Yes, I can see."

"Okay, Relax. Wait here. I'll get the things. You like tea?"

"Bluma, can I help you get the stuff?"

"Bluma can manage. It's not for you."

"Bluma, you live in the Whitehall?"

"Feh! Feh! Feh! My dear man, could I live in a place like that?"

"You're sure I can't help?"

"I'll be right back."

Bluma slowly hobbled to Broadway and turned uptown. Just before she turned the corner, however, she turned back and waved. She smiled, but I suspected that she was happy to find that I wasn't following her. I wasn't. I was sitting on the standpipe watching Ninety-ninth Street. I felt foolish all right. Bluma, at least, had the legs and the socks that matched the pipe.

Sitting there, I saw Ninety-ninth Street in a way I had never seen it before. A cousin used to live at the corner in the building with the letters missing—THE AL ND E. I must have looked at that sign a dozen times. If the building's owner would sit here for a minute, he would fix that in an hour. We are all running with our eyes wide open, but until we are forced to stop, we really never see anything. I saw the shapes of the buildings and the texture of the entire block. I looked the other way and saw a clock on a church steeple. An enormous, gargantuan clock was up there, and suddenly, it seemed a peculiar thing for a church to own. An incredible, monstrous clock! What were they doing with it? Advertising? What? I wasn't even sure such a large clock could be so benign. Certainly it was strange. I saw green plants in a window across the street. I wondered who watered the hanging vine and if they spilled water on the floor when they did so. And I saw where the old, tired cement of the sidewalk had buckled and fled on an incurable slant toward its weathered, crumbling edges.

AFTER a while, I had seen Ninety-ninth Street and still no Bluma. Even though it was comfortable, I felt more than a little incongruous, like a crumpled stalk of celery on top of an ice-cream sundae instead of the compact maraschino cherry. When a law-abiding citizen is the celery in the sundae, he fears the law. What's wrong with celery on a sundae? Nothing! It's healthier, seething with vitamins, and won't rot your teeth, but it doesn't look right, and because our hearts are corrupt, we judge only with the eye. Corrective lenses can make us all retinal chief justices: regular appearance is propriety. Strangeness is guilt. And there I sat, fearing what a policeman circling about the drug-infested, crime-related, alcohol-inebriated, homicide-saturated Upper West Side would think of my 44-long sprawled on the Siamese standpipe of Two-Fifty West Ninety-ninth Street. As the patrol car pulled to the curb, I would take the offense, "Officer, righteousness is a two-way street." "Yeah, pal, a two-way street. No loitering. Get moving." "Officer, do you believe in G-d?" "Not north of Ninety-sixth Street. Let's go." The cop car that does roll down Ninety-ninth Street doesn't bother to slow down. The cop does look at me. What is he thinking? He's probably thinking that if he had a dollar for every German shepherd who pissed on that standpipe, he'd be a millionaire, a thought which has crossed my mind from time to time even though, thank G-d, the standpipe has been freshly painted.

And there I sit, hoping that nobody I know will come walking down the street. What would I tell them? I don't have to tell anyone else anything at all. People stare at me from a distance, but they give me a wide berth when they pass. And when they pass, they don't look at me; I look at them. A few even cross the street. Shuffling past, the junkies and winos smile fearfully at this ungainly, sedentary invasion of their glass-eyed world. If strangeness is guilt, it is also fear, the most negotiable commodity on the Upper West Side. I explore my new-found power and even stare at people with dogs large enough to fool the parlor-bound Off Track Betting crowd: my, that's a hairy horse. Big deal! Two St. Bernards later I'm bored. Where is she? Where's Bluma? What's taking her so long? A panicky feeling creeps over me. What if she never returns? I'll have to sit on this pipe forever. What choice do I have? None. I sit. They stare. They fear. They look away when they pass. They tug on the leashes to save the beasts from me. I wait for her, and as I do, there is something familiar about the strangeness. Something similar to stepping (or in this case sitting) outside the realm of normal—that is to say, identifiable—behavior. Where else could it have been? It had something to do with the *shtibl*. But where was Bluma? I keep my eye on the corner of Broadway. It's a two-way street. She has to return. The baby can't nap all afternoon.

As I stare intently toward Broadway, I hear a voice call, "Hey, Hal darling! Over here!" I swing around to discover Bluma standing in front of the AL NDA E near West End Avenue. Bluma as Daniel Boone. At her feet are one shopping bag and one old beaten-up suitcase.

"You drink tea, Hal?"

"Yes."

"Good. You got a box."

"Bluma, you want this back?"

"Bags! Bluma's got a million bags!"

"No, the suitcase?"

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"Suitcases, too!"

We walked to Broadway together.

"Thanks, Bluma."

"Don't mention."

"I'll see you in the *shtibl* Tuesday."

"We'll see. . . . Now I gotta go over there and sit down. It's comfortable, no?"

"Yes, it is. You could use a rest."

"I'll say. Be well, Hal."

"You, too. And thank you."

I *shlepped* that suitcase down Broadway. Daniel Boone only had Indians to worry about. I had roaches. I knew I was in trouble when I put the bag down to wait for the light at Ninety-sixth, and the bag started running home by itself. I was tempted to follow it to find out where Bluma lived, but that hardly seemed fair after all the trouble she had taken in circling the block. Bluma definitely had uptown roaches who had no interest in exploring Ninety-third Street. I had to carry them the whole way. They just wouldn't walk in my direction. As I spotted some moving about the bag, I was tempted to throw everything into a large, wire litter basket on the corner. I fought it off. It would be too dangerous to have a wire basket careening riderless uptown. And how did I know Bluma wasn't watching me now? But I did know I couldn't bring those things into the house. When I got back, I took them straight to the basement and gingerly examined their contents next to the collected refuse. The infested clothes were out of the question. The tea looked pretty bad, too. The Jewish calendars were in good shape, but the most recent one was four years old. We had a current one upstairs and how many garish pictures of Moses coming off the mountain with the golden rays of light hitting his head could one apartment tolerate? Then I came across a short, ugly metal lamp. Maroon, without a bulb or lampshade. It seemed difficult for a roach to penetrate, so I decided this was the object to cherish. I also kept an old coffee pot. I didn't want the lamp to feel alone. Stamping my feet in self-defense, I backed my way onto the elevator. Upstairs, I also washed the gifts. By the time I finished, I needed a rest. I sat down—on a chair.

Several Tuesdays later, I waited for the others to leave before I offered Bluma an envelope.

"No. Keep it."

"It's for you."

"Listen, Hal, you keep it. If I need it, I'll get in touch."

"How can you get in touch, you don't have my number?"

"Yeah, good idea. Write it for me."

I put the envelope back in my pocket and gave her my number.

"What was it? A five-dollar bill?" she asked.

"Yes."

"That's good."

We walked outside together.

"Hal darling, during the winter, you'll miss me."

"Why?"

"My dear man, I should slip and fall on the ice? Feh! Feh! Feh! What are you talking about? I've got to be careful."

"I'll miss you, Bluma."

"Of course you will."

I DIDN'T see Bluma all winter. Nor did I hear from her. I thought it strange that Bluma should disappear for the winter like a bear because she couldn't hibernate. She had to awaken every morning. Well, I figured, that's how Bluma wants it. I thought about her from time to time, especially when my daughter wore the blue pullover or I turned on the ugly, maroon lamp. Something else reminded me of her. I finally recalled the activity outside the realm of normal public behavior that had haunted me when I was camped out on Bluma's standpipe. It involved the moon. Let me explain.

The Jewish calendar is a lunar calendar. The first day of the new month is celebrated as a minor holiday. During the Sabbath service preceding the new moon (new month), we intone, "Let it be Thy will to renew us for a good and blessed month." And "May He who miraculously redeemed our fathers from slavery to freedom, quickly redeem us and gather us from our Diaspora to the land of Israel, for all Jews are brothers." The Blessing of the New Moon is performed outdoors at night. The new moon, a fragile crescent, can be blessed during the period of its renewal, from the time it is easily seen until it becomes a full moon. Traditionally, it's done on Saturday night after the evening services because when we bless the moon, we encounter the *Shekhinah*, G-d's Holy Presence, and consequently Sabbath attire is appropriate. Immediately following the service, every one of us in the congregation grabs a prayer book, and we go piling down into Ninety-first Street in search of the moon. Depending on the season, sometimes we simply cross the street; other times we must go all the way down the block and even cross West End Avenue to get an unobstructed view. "C'mon! It's over here!" And the properly attired horde goes racing down the block and across West End Avenue to glance quickly at the crescent moon. After a quick glance at the moon, everyone hastily opens his book and begins furiously chattering away. How can we read the blessing so quickly in the dark? The Blessing of the Moon is printed in extra large letters because of this difficulty. Indeed, all large letters are referred to in Hebrew as Blessing-the-Moon letters. And we read quickly. "The heavenly bodies are ecstatically happy to do the will of their creator, the true producer, whose production is truth. And the moon was commanded to renew itself as a glorious crown for those not yet born, for they are to be renewed in the future as the moon is, and they will glorify their Creator for His glorious majesty. Blessed are You, O Lord, who renews the months!"

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Normally, a prayer service in the *shtibl* is a free-form event, but there is some structure. Under the moon, however, it is completely unstructured and each of us takes off helter-skelter for himself, but there is some group interaction. At a specific point in the prayer, each worshiper must exchange greetings with three other individuals. He looks up from his prayerbook and taps someone. "*Shalom aleichem*, Peace unto you!" The other must interrupt his prayer to respond, "Unto you, peace!" In turn this individual will address three greetings and receive three responses. The threefold exchange washes through the group like a mad tidal wave of greeting, leaving eddies and lone swells of peace in its murmuring wake. One of our less learned congregants refers to the ceremony as "praying to the moon." This is, of course, blasphemous. In fact, when one utters the line, "As I dance opposite you, O Moon, and I am not able to touch you, thus may my enemies not be able to do me harm," we are adjured to dance in a manner that clearly suggests blessing of the moon and not worship. Monotheistic choreography dictates that one leap stiff-legged so as to avoid any bending of the knee that might be misinterpreted as idolatrous worship. This admonition is carefully respected. The effect is a mad, stiff-legged happening that looks like a Buster Keaton movie run at twice the usual herky-jerky speed. With one notable exception—Reb Meir Hurwitz is so inspired by this line in the service that he plants each hand on the shoulder of a tall neighbor and with a quick thrust of his short, powerful arms goes sailing above the throng, almost launching himself into lunar orbit.

How do we appear then, on a dark street corner in the middle of the night? An unshaven (we have not been permitted to shave since the Sabbath began) but well-dressed group of Jews rocking and chanting cacophonously, lickety-split as they tap each other while they leap about like stiff-legged kangaroos with the exception of one, Reb Meir Hurwitz, who sails over the group like an ecstatic, lock-legged version of Rodin's statue of Balzac, and all this directed toward the banana moon rising a quarter of a million miles above Daitch Shopwell supermarket, where hordes of real bananas can be had for seventeen cents a pound. Passers-by tend not to cross at our corner. Those who must pass us often step into the street and rarely look directly at us.

We all read as quickly as we can for the obvious reason: the hapless *shmendrik* who finishes last will have all the prayer books foisted upon him, and he must *shlep* the towering, heavy stack across the street, down the block, and up the stairs into the *shtibl*, opening two doors unaided. But that is only the obvious reason; there is another, even more powerful one. Who wants to look and feel like a fool? Strangeness is guilt. Blessing the moon might put us in the presence of G-d (certainly a good deed), but it also exposes us to people's fearful faces. And that calls for a fast finish. This is the Diaspora, baby!

After that realization, every time we blessed the new moon, I thought of Bluma and my having sat on her standpipe amidst the incredulous, fearful stares. Bluma and the moon both moved me from the realm of the inconspicuous, the dwelling place of the complacent. The stubby thumb had better be more powerful than any camouflaged finger. It has to be, to survive. So Bluma and the moon began to be associated together in my mind —a vague enough, but real sort of relationship. Initially, I simply considered it a curiosity.

As I performed this *mitzvah* month after month, something was happening. I was finding a pleasure, a sense of satisfaction in it. More often than not, I was the *shmendrik* who *shlepped* the prayer books back to the *shtibl*.

Bluma reappeared one raw spring day. Not in the *shtibl*, but across the street.

"Hal darling, over here."

"Bluma, how are you?"

"Don't ask, a single person should never be born."

"What's wrong?"

"Use your head!"

We stood there a moment.

"Bluma, why didn't you come into the *shtibl*?"

"Who needs them? Hyah! Hyah! Hyah!"

Horselike, Bluma tilted her head and chomped her teeth to utter the cruel, neighing "hyah." I looked at Bluma. The red socks had not made it through the winter. The cane was gone, too. Bluma leaned on a baby-carriage axle that looked harsh and vicious. Held vertically, it also resembled a degenerate ski pole. The presence of one broken ski pole suggested instability. Bluma spoke rapidly, punctuating her remarks with the explosive neigh-like hyah-hyah-hyahs! She spoke against people.

"The rabbi's no good! A beard for people, but not for G-d! American rabbis! Feh! Feh! Feh! I give him three dollars for a big mezzuzah like the *shtibl* has—and he gets me a little one. I told him I didn't like it, but did he give me the three dollars back? What kind of rabbi is that? A *gonif*! A thief! A *gonif*! You're not like that. You're from the other side. Rabbis aren't like that on the other side, are they?"

"Bluma," I explained, "I'm not from Israel. I'm from St. Louis."

"That's not around here, is it?"

"No."

"You're from the other side. . . . See!"

And I heard about legal actions—falls, insurance, lawyers. I could never understand any of the stories. I would ask why a lawyer had taken a particular action:

"Why? A farmer puts an egg under a chicken! You know what that means? You don't know? It

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means he takes two. Shut your mouth! You got to be intelligent! Hyah! Hyah! Hyah!"

Bluma, who had always guarded her private life and personal history so closely, was suddenly revealing things inadvertently and not caring.

"How do I know so much about courts?" she would yell. "That Irishman I married. He changed his 'fate' for me, the alcoholic. I was always in the court for non-support. I used to sit and listen to the other cases. You can learn a lot."

And I heard about her dog for the first time.

"Bluma, you have a dog?"

"Yeah, what's wrong with that? She's good company. Shut your mouth! She's intelligent; she listens. Brownie understands Yiddish. That's better than you."

Still, I heard the old Bluma, "G-d is with the righteous. Don't worry about G-d." But I was most moved when I asked if I might give her some money.

"Money's not everything. What about *yener velt*, the world to come?"

"You're right, Bluma, but can I help you a little?"

For the first time that morning she softened and some of the frantic tension left her.

"Hal darling, I retired. I got another check, a little money. Others need more than me."

"That's wonderful."

"We'll see. Maybe from time to time you'll give me a little something. I know some very poor people and, after all, Bluma has to give a little 'righteousness,' too."

"Sure, Bluma."

"But, Hal darling, we'll still talk. You gotta talk to people. You know that, Hal, don't you?"

"We all have to talk."

"Now shut up and listen. Don't interrupt all the time. It's not right!"

BLUMA had returned, but the winter of loneliness had taken its toll. Much of her charm and style had disappeared with the red socks. Spring, a new season, and even the DiMaggios can't play forever. Bluma could not move as well, the legs heavier and slower. Apparently our relationship had changed as well. I had survived her brutal winter. Now we were old friends. We talked. How we talked. For Bluma, I became a chance to converse with a world which wouldn't see, which wouldn't listen, which wouldn't care.

"Look at me. Only the police look me in the eye. They understand me. They laugh. Are you observant? Do you study people? I observe them. The policeman said to me, 'Bluma, you should be a detective!'—I study people."

We began speaking on the phone. Everyone in her building was an addict or an alcoholic or a thief or murderer. The manager was no good. The super was a sex maniac. I believed all of this. A welfare hotel offers more human degradation than hell ever could.

"It's terrible, my dear man, I can't stand it. . . . Yes, I live in the Whitehall. You guessed. You're not as dumb as you act."

She would no longer take any money, but she still insisted that I take from her. What I didn't drag home! My pregnant wife could not believe it. What could she say? Nothing.

In the summer during my vacation I had agreed to pick up a load. It was humid and in the 90's. It struck me as madness. What in the world could come out of such a project? I went out the door and was met by the wall of brilliant, sticky heat. I headed uptown. At 10 in the morning, the harsh heat and heavy air hung over Broadway like a motionless, fly-covered beast. As I walked, I wondered how in blazes I ever got here. Something must have gone wrong with my life somewhere.

When I approached Ninety-sixth Street, I saw a very tall young woman with a dog. They were walking in the same direction as I was. I could see her legs. I thought it must be the mind-joggling heat. Those legs looked like they belonged to Peggy Hartridge, my freshman flame at Harvard. She had nice legs all right. I walked behind her for a block. The woman seemed very young; too young to be Peggy. It had been years. So I just walked behind her, focusing on those lovely, young legs and basking in memory to escape the insufferable heat. Peggy Hartridge. What an unrequited relationship that was! Calculus class, homework together, walks in the snow together, and countless ice-cream cones. Almost six feet tall, blond, blue-eyed, and bright. Everything you could ask for in a math partner. I got a B-; she got an A. Bluma would believe that part, all right. There had been no chance that Peggy was going to change her "fate" for me. Our relationship never blossomed. I had the inclination, but not the courage, and she was always falling in love with someone else. A sophomore who looked like a Swedish lumberjack, straight A's in linguistics. A German, unlike Henry Kissinger, a real one, who took her sailing at night on an African Lake (her father was a Peace Corps administrator) where the waves were so high they blotted out the brilliant stars, and who during the day casually shot king cobras. What did I have to offer? By day, I took her to the bleachers in Fenway Park and explained why the left-field wall was called the green monster, and by night I took her to see a thirty-year-old subtitled film, *The Dybbuk*. But what I found most attractive about her was the way she received a compliment. With absolute grace and charm. She wasn't embarrassed or thrilled, but very direct and appreciative. I don't think Peggy Hartridge knew about the Evil Eye the way Bluma did.

"Bluma, you're a wonderful person," I had said.

"Shut up! Whaddaya' want to do, give me the Evil Eye?"

What did Peggy know about the Evil Eye? The boat never capsized, the cobra never bit her, and

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every time I came close, a Swedish lumberjack walked into her life. The worst thing that ever happened to her was when she caught mono. Some Evil Eye! She went to the infirmary for two weeks, studied for finals, got all A's, and fit as a fiddle flew off to watch the snake charmer.

Enough was enough. I walked ahead of the lady with the dog and looked back, fully expecting to find myself staring into a strange, terrified face. Even if it were Peggy, how could she recognize me with a beard and long hair?

"Hello, Peggy," I said, somewhat surprised.

"Hal, how are you?" she answered coolly.

"Fine, how are you?"

"Good, thank you."

"Peggy, what are you doing here?"

"I'm coming back from the vet on Seventy-ninth."

Along with a charming dog, Peggy had acquired a Ph.D. in history and was teaching at City College. She certainly hadn't aged. We talked about what we were doing because Peggy did not seem to remember the past very well, a strange failing for a history professor, I thought. We arrived at Ninety-ninth, and there was Bluma at the corner. I introduced them.

"Bluma, Peggy."

"What's your dog's name?" Bluma asked Peggy.

"Duncan," Peggy answered.

"Duncan?" Bluma queried.

"Yes, Duncan," Peggy repeated.

"Duncan," Bluma said. "You'll forgive me, my dear, but Duncan is a stupid name for a dog. It's a person's name."

"What's wrong with that?" Peggy laughed.

"He's not a person. He's a dog," Bluma generously explained. "When I got my dog, her name was Lady, but that was stupid. Lady is what you call a person, so I changed her name to Brownie because she's brown. See!"

"I guess so," Peggy said pleasantly.

"No, you don't," Bluma said. "Why not call him Blackie, he looks kind of black?"

Peggy did not respond.

"Call him Spot," Bluma suggested by way of a compromise for the solid-colored dog. "Maybe he's got a spot."

"I like the name Duncan," Peggy said.

"It's a nice name, but it doesn't make sense!" Bluma explained.

I switched the topic and after a little small talk, Peggy excused herself. We watched the six-foot, blond, blue-eyed creature walk toward West End with her large black dog.

"She's a *shiksa,* isn't she?" Bluma said matter-of-factly.

"How could you tell?" I asked.

"Duncan is a *goyish* name," she answered. And then she said, "Wait around the corner. I'll get the stuff."

"Can't I get it for you?" I offered.

"Shut up! Nobody should know our business."

Bereft of Bluma, Peggy, and Duncan, I waited on Broadway in hot, steamy misery, thinking what a strange coincidence that had been. As I was daydreaming in the heat, Bluma arrived with the packages. In some ways, she hadn't changed. Bluma still would not embarrass me. She put the packages down in front of Cake Masters bakery and crossed to the curb where she pretended to greet the man delivering magazines and newspapers.

"Oh," Bluma called merrily to him, "how are you, my friend?" And then still walking toward him, she spun her head in my direction and hissed vehemently, "Use your head! Use your head!"

I ran over and picked up the packages and started to *shlep* them downtown. What a strange day! Talk about threads! Ageless Peggy Hartridge comes looping back after all those years. But Bluma was right. G-d is good; I could have gone the way of Henry Kissinger and Bluma. I could have thrown my life away, cut myself off from my roots—and what for? A woman who names a dog Duncan! It's not even a nice name.

And in that bundle was an army trench coat, the arms right. My wife admitted that the long green combat coat fit me better than anything I had ever had tailored. I wore an army coat in a time of peace, but Bluma maintained her war, battling in the trenches on a hundred different fronts. Her words remained a verbal feast, but I did not have the stomach for them. Not with all the pain and hurt that was served with them. And strange things began to surface. One day Bluma rang our bell, but I could not hear over the intercom so I went downstairs to see who it was. I invited Bluma up, but she refused. We talked in the lobby. After a while, my wife came down to see what had happened. She joined the conversation. After we had spoken for a while, I escorted Bluma to the corner.

"You got problems, Hal. Your wife is a jealous woman."

"You think so, Bluma?"

"C'mon! Why did she come down?"

"She just wanted to see who it was," I answered.

"Use your head. Be careful! Hyah! Hyah! Hyah!"

"You are a remarkable person, Bluma!"

"People love me. The world loves me. I have a remarkable personality. It's a gift," she said with pride.

WHAT could I do for Bluma? I turned to the moon. The moon had the answers, for the moon and Bluma were sisters. The answers were in the Talmud. In Genesis it is written, "And G-d made two great lights." Later it calls them "the greater light and the lesser light." What happened? Originally the sun and the moon were of equal magnitude. The moon came to G-d and asked, "Can two kings wear the same crown?" *Sfora*! The moon was right, but

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G-d commanded the moon to make itself smaller. The moon asked, "Since what I have suggested is a good idea, why must I make myself smaller?" G-d heard the moon, and decreed that the moon will rule by day and night. The moon asked, "What good is a candle (the small moon) in broad daylight?" G-d said that Israel will count the days and years according to the moon, but the moon answered that the sun was needed for this, also. And when G-d saw that he could not console the moon, the Holy One commanded Israel "to bring an atonement for me because I have made the moon smaller."

And Israel brought a sacrifice for the Lord on the New Moon until the Temple was destroyed. And Israel blessed and still blesses the moon in its renewal, for in the moon's renewal we see the symbol of Israel's renewal. Every nation has a heavenly advocate. Israel's is the moon, that pale creature of *sfora*. Esau's is the sun. It is written, "Esau hates Jacob (Israel)." But Jacob does not hate Esau because the moon has forgiven the sun since G-d is good. To demonstrate this—and to emulate this freedom from jealousy—we say "Peace unto you. Peace unto you. Peace unto you," as we bless the New Moon.

And every month the moon begins its heavenly renewal in the hope that this renewal will be the ultimate and final renewal, for G-d is good. And Israel below chants as it blesses, "The throne of King David is established forever!" For the throne of David, the dynasty of David, the Messiah of David shall, "like the moon, be established forever." And the renewal of the "New Month" and "King David of Israel Lives and Endures" possess according to the numerical values of their Hebrew letters the identical sum, eight hundred and nineteen. The ultimate numbers game—eight hundred and nineteen—redemption—the Messiah.

And yet we who attempt to bless the moon from West End Avenue and Bluma on Broadway stand isolated and ashamed as we reach to grasp a wanderer's hand. Bluma and the moon: both had been wronged, both remained faithful, and both pursued subservient, but never servile circuits about other bodies, heavenly and human, no grander in creation but less diminished in an everyday, material world. The moon chasing about the earth to catch the fire of the sun and Bluma looping though the Upper West Side to catch the coins of undiminished human fortunes. Bluma and the moon awaiting the *shofar*'s final, redemptive blast.

What does that leave for the moon maiden, Bluma, on the Upper West Side? What could I do? Bluma made greater and greater demands on my time. Bluma expressed her love—the power to control. Perhaps I did not love. Perhaps I did, for I countered with demands that Bluma could not meet. I invited her for the Sabbath meal. I invited her for any meal. I invited her to visit. Once, when she was in the hallway outside our door, I asked her to come in for "at least a cup of tea."

"Hal darling, I remember a woman who was very good to me. She begged me to come into her for a meal. Finally, I came. She put the food on the table. When I sat down, she moved over to the window sill. See! I am observant. The policeman said, Bluma, you should be a detective.' See!"

Everything she said was true, but I invited her for Rosh Hashanah anyway. Can't we learn? And it was our anniversary of sorts. No, she wouldn't come. I told her that we would be expecting her and if she could not make it, not to worry, we would understand.

"What are you having, Hal?"

"Turkey."

"Turkey is *goyish*."

I heard the *shofar*—the calls of creation—and I thought of the moon—the calls of the Messiah—and I thought of the moon and Bluma. I knew that the heavenly threads being woven were for Bluma. We returned from the *shtibl* for lunch and, without Bluma, we ate the *goyish* bird.

YOM KIPPUR arrived and I donned my shroud for the Day of Atonement. White shrouds, for white is the color of the angels. Shrouds, for life is the name of the game. And in the morning, a man walked in and told us that the Arabs had attacked Israel. And we turned to pray, as is the custom, for we wear shrouds, and they do the dying. We prayed. And after the Day of Atonement, we ran out to Bless the Moon. How quickly we blessed the moon before we dashed home for news. "What is happening? Have they stopped them yet?" And the news was not good. The war dragged on for too long. The nation is small, the wound is large, and the precious blood flows quickly. And the relentless, steely cold fear of destruction hovered over a small people of flesh. And the threads were soaked in blood. The holiday season continued and so did the blood. It was a fear such as I have never known. How could we rejoice? Yet we tried. Talk about threads! An impenetrable snarl! And I repented of my arrogant sin. The threads were not simply Bluma's and the moon's, but the threads of an entire nation. And in the middle of it all—the war, the fear—there was a pennant race. Who could care? And for the first time, it dawned on me that someone led the National League in batting the year two million Jews died in Auschwitz. Who can comprehend the middle?

In the incomprehensible middle, where could I turn? To the beginning and to the end. The threads are Bluma's, the nation's, the moon's and mine. I turned to the moon. For the moon is memory, and we are a people of memory. The sun has no memory. The sun does not need one. It is ageless and always shining. Peggy Hartridge cannot remember her past. For her, it is always the present. Bluma the Beggar has no present. She possesses the past (she has never forgotten any-

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thing) and the future. Memory is the curse of Bluma and the Jews, and it is our salvation. We live in the past and rebuild the future. The world compresses us into the present. Either we transcend it, or we go crazy. The acquisitive millionaire in Scarsdale and the ascetic Talmudist in Brooklyn are two sides of the same coin. Both are driven by the past and the future. One accepting. One rejecting. But it's the same fuel—higher octane than lies under any Arabian desert.

The sun is Esau. The sun is the present. The sun is obvious. The sun is hairy. Nothing is hairier than the sun. One sees it in all the pictures children draw. When the sons of Esau landed on the moon of Jacob, what did they do? They took pictures and flung Hasselblad cameras over the face of the moon. The moon remembers. The sun is static. The moon is born, grows, and dies, only to be reborn. It is no mistake that the moon affects the tides. For the seas are the insensate potential of creation. The great tremendous unstructured and unchartable mass—chaos and creation. The moon tugs invisibly only on those liquid currents of immutable repose and fathomless desire—the pulsating sea and the immeasurable human heart. The moon is the tide of the Diaspora—a self-contained wave sweeping the face of the earth in bitter greeting.

The bitter tide sweeps through the incomprehensible present. The threads are tangled. The sorrow is real. Bluma's complaints grew. Bluma couldn't live there. What could Bluma do? She gave to help Israel.

"Hal, they got trouble on the other side. If we don't help 'em, what'll be?"

What could I do? I went to the Whitehall with a lawyer, a Spanish-speaking rabbi, and an old Lower East Side hand, all from the *shtibl,* to see if we could help. We couldn't. Bluma's horrors—junkies, winos—were real, all right, but her complaints—a leaky sink, a broken toilet—were imaginary. Brownie was lying on the bed because the room was filled with boxes, suitcases, and bags from floor to ceiling. The lawyer asked why she kept all that stuff.

"My dear man, everyone has something."

We had failed. Bluma said we had made things worse. Perhaps we had. For the first time, I *shlepped* downtown from Bluma's unencumbered by a material load. I carried a heavier one: Bluma was in pain and I could not help. On the way back, I saw the phony, arm in sling, at Ninety-sixth Street. People gave to him. The Talmud says, thank heaven for the phonies, or we would have to give to all who asked. In the middle, G-d bless him.

I was depressed. The Yom Kippur War. Bluma. Myself. Then my wife gave birth—another girl baby. I was ecstatic. I called and told the good news to Bluma, who told me that I was no good. She said that I never called, I made things worse, I would have destroyed the world except for G-d. "G-d is good."

I hung up less ecstatic, but understanding, for I had a wise teacher. The disease contained its cure. We shall arrive at the ends of our threads because of our gladness. The Talmud tells us that "the Divine Presence dwells among Israel only in gladness," and I know that gladness is from man, who knows that G-d is good. How could we not be glad? I have my teachers of gladness, quieting the terror-crested wave of bitterness. The Messianic moon renewing the throne of David. Then we shall all be on the other side, dwelling in our land of peace. It will surely be. The Messiah! Although I weep now for Bluma, I am glad, for that day will come when everyone has something. Oh, that Bluma, will she have something! She will have the *shofar*'s calls—the Holy Threads—which will hang in the windows of her room, shielding her from lunacy. For lunacy will be the moon shining by day and night as brilliantly as the sun. And I shall stand to honor my teacher when the door to her room opens. . . . Room 819.

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Of Graves and Poets

Eleanor Clark

It is no small part of the beauty of the so-called Protestant Cemetery in Rome that Keats is buried there. The word felicity comes to mind around this fact, because it is of that order of experience to be brought up against all the tough intellectual rigor, the nearly impossible demands of vision and fitness of thought, that went into his sense of "beauty" and could make it equate with "truth"—the very opposite of wallowing in facile landscape. Yet of course there is another fitness in the place having remained as beautiful as it has in the ordinary meaning, and still another in his having some rather good company there, though mostly of later times and on the whole of something less than the genius often vaguely associated with it. The charm, taking that word too as deeply as we can manage, of this piece of ground next to Rome's one Pyramid, while enhanced by thoughts of the "truly great," is both more and less than the titillation of looking at tombstones of famous people. Less because there are not so many there, far fewer than of their and other people's infant children. More because the charm is of Rome itself, in its hold on the mind of the world outside Italy.

It is a foreign enclave, of non-Catholics—Germans, Scandinavians, English, Americans, Greeks, Russians—administered by diplomatic representatives of the countries chiefly involved; an exception may have been made now and then but the rule is that Italian Protestants, or agnostics or atheists, are not allowed to be buried there unless married or related to a foreigner. So one might expect a feeling of double alienation, from life and from home, unless with Shelley one were inclined to be "half in love with death, at the thought that one should be buried in so sweet a place." But no, although he was right about the quality of the place and would be still by some strange mercy today, it is not like any of that, or need not be. It would be too callow to call the cemetery festive, but gloomless it certainly is, and homeless its dead are not. One might even speak of it as having, as a community shared also by its lovely vegetation and the large colony of cats at the base of the adjacent Pyramid, a rare sense of humor. At least it serves as sufficient comment on the outbreak of Thanatology courses and other vulgarities on the subject in our country nowadays, of the Facing the Facts and How to Be Bereaved and Like It categories, rather more horrid than the inhibitions they replace; and yes, toward those embarrassments as in other ways, surely we can imagine this little plot in Rome, unique in the world as it is, as wearing something in the nature of a smile.

Not the "infant's smile" Shelley gave it in *Adonais,* nor quite "the light of laughing flowers" he saw there over the dead. It would be a gentle and generous one, though so many battles have swirled around the spot and the names can't all be of people who were generous and peaceable in life. This quiet garden keeps the dignity of human grief. For the non-Catholic and non-Latin mind it does so far more than the enormous Campo Verano, the regular cemetery of Rome since 1837, out by San Lorenzo fuori le Mura, quite beautiful too in its setting and planting but where pathos is crushed by the *bella figura:* the expense, the show, the need to outdo in pomposity of monuments, along with the sorry custom of trying to immortalize the deceased with portraits and photographs, down to the cheapest snapshots of the poor in their little boxes tier on tier in the walls. No *bella figura* there and there must be many who cannot afford even that. By the Pyramid, there are relatively few pretentious monuments, and probably not many of very poor people either, aside from some of the artists and students and political refugees. By and large the foreign colonies in Rome over the last two hundred years have been something short of indigent.

At the time of Keats's death, in the still sorrowful and resonant little room over the Piazza di Spagna, in 1821, there were not many stones or names of any kind in the cemetery. There was no wall around any part of it, then or for another half a century, except the Pyramid and the adjoining section of the Aurelian Wall at the top of the slope. It was part of what was called the Agro, the "fields of the Roman people," and looks

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very rural indeed in engravings of the time, with its small sprinkling of tombstones close to the Pyramid as though for protection from its age and bulk, and oxcart tracks between the clusters. The trees around appear to be live oaks; the pines and cypresses were planted much later. Protection was needed, and Caius Cestius, he of the Pyramid, dead in 12 B.C.E., was not always up to the job. Monte Testaccio, down at what is now the other end of the block, the hill formed from debris of ancient potsherds, was a site of all sorts of rowdy goings-on, with drinking places in its caverns. Tombs were sometimes vandalized and funeral groups were apt to be attacked, perhaps less out of Catholic devotion than proprietary feeling about the fields. This is given as the reason for the prohibition of daytime funerals; one burial scene by torchlight, in an etching by Pinelli of 1811, looks more like a witches' sabbath. Another prohibition may or may not have had to do with a fear of stirring up popular outrage; more likely it reflects the motto of ruling Church circles—*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. Until 1870 crosses were forbidden over the graves, as were the word God, quotations from Scripture, or any hint of eternal salvation.

That would have been a plus to Shelley, and no worry to Keats, who in the atrocious misery of his last months, the only months of his life in Rome, yet knew of what kind his salvation would be if any were in the cards: "I think I shall be among the English poets after my death." What pleased him was his friend Joseph Severn's report of the wild flowers, especially violets and daisies, that grew in profusion around the ground. Severn, in his heroic efforts to soothe a mind already close to cracking, from loss and hopelessness and the particular torments of that long dying, would not have mentioned the possible violences at the cemetery, if he knew of them. No other plan was possible in any case. But in that same year an aged English aristocrat, who because of his years and social station had special permission to bury his daughter by daylight, had to do it accompanied by a squadron of mounted police, and eight months later was himself buried by torchlight (from a pamphlet on the cemetery by Johan Beck-Friis, published in Sweden in 1965).

One likes to think that Keats would have been pleased too to think of the sheep and goats grazing among the graves and the smattering of broken ancient columns, although he had more feeling for plants than for animals, at least large ones—he was all empathy with the cricket, the grasshopper, and the nightingale—and if the herds had been large or regular they would have finished off the daisies. In any case there was nothing to keep them out. After years of requests and efforts by diplomats, of Prussia, Hanover, and Russia, and the more effective pleas of a Danish prince in the year of Keats's death, the papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Consalvi, was still raising obstacles to any demarcation of the ground, and as the great poet he certainly never heard of lay across town in his youth, yearning for the relief of death, the cardinal was giving orders to have six cypresses around a tomb cut down because they spoiled the view of the Pyramid. Keats had been buried three years since, and Shelley two, when in lieu of a fence or wall, a kind of moat was dug around the old part of the cemetery, which came to be known as "the dogs' ditch" from the corpses of dogs and cats that were thrown into it. Not that such as Consalvi were the whole story. As has often been pointed out in this connection, religious intolerance the other way around was rife in England at the time, and on the whole the bosses at the Vatican were anxious to please the English in Italy, in view of all the "gold" they began to spend there after the close of the Napoleonic Wars.

According to Beck-Friis, the records of the cemetery before World War II have been lost. There was fighting nearby when the Allies reached Rome, June 4, 1944, ending the nine-month German occupation, and one is free to imagine that some crackpot bit of looting, Neanderthal or pious, may have been responsible. An earlier memoir by H. Nelson Gay, published in 1913, states that the register of burials did exist at that time, but it must have been rather hit or miss. As far as is known now, the first was of a twenty-five-year-old Oxford student of high degree named Langton, in 1738. Before that, foreign non-Catholics in Rome seem to have been buried wherever a hidden or country spot could be found for the purpose, or else with prostitutes along the Muro Torto, then as now a center of that trade; or they could be sent, if feasible, to the Protestant cemetery in Livorno. The burial that Gay lists as the first was of another young aristocrat, also twenty-five, in 1765. He was Baron George Werpup of Hanover, killed in a fall from his carriage, who grew into something of a legend, as being responsible for the Pope's official acknowledgment of the cemetery, in spite of God's exclusion from it; the story is that in his great love of Rome the young man, of enough patrician caste to have such introductions, had been determined to end his days there, though no doubt not so soon, and talked the Holy Father into that much tolerance. The age of twenty-five has a broader poignancy, or jinx, in the place. Keats is often spoken of as having died at twenty-six, perhaps because the mind boggles at the scope of his work and achievement at any such age, but actually was only four months past his twenty-fifth birthday, and the unhappy German poet Wilhelm Waiblinger was also twenty-five when he was buried there in 1830.

Back to the 18th century and aristocrats, who either had a monopoly on the ground or were the only ones traveling at the time, there is a Sir

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James McDonald, Baronet, dead at twenty-four in August 1766; July and August were the lethal months, as Shelley and his wife were to discover with the loss of their child, William, through their lingering in the city into that season. But the widespread illusion of Rome as a health center could be dashed at any time. The Humboldt of the sign near the entrance is not the famous philologist and diplomat, Wilhelm, but his infant son who died in 1803, to be followed shortly after by a brother. Gay gives the figure of under thirty graves in 1818, when Shelley described the place in a letter as the most beautiful and solemn cemetary he had ever seen; from pictures of the time one would guess closer to a hundred.

Among the adults of this company, then and up to the present, Keats is rare, though not alone, in having had next to no firsthand experience of Rome or even acquaintance with it. The voice, the air, the common language of the cemetery—and there is one, beyond all the linguistic divisions commemorated there; the flowers and rambling vines and crooked little paths have their say in it—has for one element a curious reciprocity between people and city, of a kind that occurs nowhere else.

This is to speak of an overall charity and grace that everyone feels in the cemetery, no matter how they express it or fail to. It is true of all graveyards that visitors, sightseers, wander more slowly than they are accustomed to, "repressing haste, as too unholy there," but from this one it would be hard to find a person so stupefied as to come away without a mellower sense of life. "Lovely," "moving," "beautiful," "nice," even Shelley's now bygone "sweet" are the common adjectives—all referring to a charmed relaxation of strain around the fact of death and toward those, psychologists and others, who would beat our brains out groping for ultimate answers in the absence of religion. Not that groping isn't in order, but the all-day question mark seems a little less useful as a guide to living than the hair shirt, or than Shelley's hide-and-seek metaphysical personage, Demogorgon *(Prometheus Unbound)*. Keats in his genius of sympathy with all that makes up the flow of life, a reason among others for his being so profoundly at home with Shakespeare, said it very well in the famous letter to his brothers on Negative Capability, "that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason. . . ." A sentence liable to be mistaken as crudely anti-philosophical if taken out of the whole context of his work and letters. All it means is that he had Shakespeare's generic *kind* of intelligence, as against the isolated, frameless—therefore un-Miltonic, un-Dantesque—overreaching after "The Reason For It All," sure poison to poetry. The key word is "irritable." In that sense his grave could not be more appropriate.

Yet it will not do to forget something there that he had no part of, and never would have had. A certain seediness tends to attach to foreign colonies anywhere, and more in Rome than in Paris, since the contemporary intellectual demands are less and the tendency for many people is to sink into laziness of one kind or another, via social rounds or wistful learning or *dolce far niente*. This has been true at least throughout the relatively short age of the cemetery. The English and American artists who settled in Rome in the 19th century had among other good reasons for it the remarkable quality of the Roman light, also relief from the Anglo-Saxon civic conscience; they went with a notion of and even a passion for serious work, but not one who remained to be buried there, as many are, is of interest now except to the most specialized connoisseur. The blessings of the city were obvious; the vital drain from lack of responsibility, except to one's art or some notion of the pleasant life, has always been more insidious, having to do very deeply with the matter of vocabulary. The poetic voice of the cemetery veils more than a diversity of real languages; the pathetic gutlessness and inaccuracy of most expatriate speech, in any language, are another part of the common bond, for many of the lives in question. Keats would have fled, we know, long before this could happen to his tongue or mind. Of those who stayed for good, who really made Rome their home, the great exceptions on the side of achievement are scholars, predominantly German or Scandinavian, whose field of interest was centered there, giving their choice of domicile an overriding sense they couldn't have done without.

On a different level, however, for Keats as for many who were not permanent residents, there would be a sense of belonging, through a claim of heritage. Montaigne wrote, *"Je savais le Capitol et son plan avant que je susse le Louvre, et le Tibre avant la Seine."* Chateaubriand some two hundred and fifty years later dreamed of ending his days, or so he professed momentarily, at Sant' Onofrio on the Janiculum, near *"la chambre où Tasse expira."* And so it went over the centuries; nobody with education was really an alien there, in one part of their being and for a while. Young Waiblinger, body and soul at last unable to keep together after a four-year struggle on what he could earn away from Germany, could nevertheless write in a last letter to his family, for their or his own consolation, "I die on Roman soil."

In his case the attachment seems to have been made up of peculiarly fierce and diverse curiosities, and he might or might not have stayed on into old age; probably not. Italy was all the rage in intellectual Germany at the time, owing in part to new windows opened on classical and Renaissance art by Winckelmann, but Goethe, who

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fanned the fad into a fever, and extended his own stay in Rome by many months until he could feel himself thoroughly re-educated—at the age of forty—could not have stayed longer than that. A striking fact of his Roman journals is that it is only in the first months that he is really open to the sights of the city; in the second half he has drawn into his own states of mind in regard to them. A few years later we find him uninterested in being in Italy at all, and to have that book reopened by the burial there of his only son in 1830—a son furthermore who was neither a poet nor apparently very educable, though he was making his first visit to Rome at just the age when his father had—must have been a sad twist of irony.

In that case only a crowning one. The son, August, only survivor past infancy of five children, was seventeen before Goethe got around to marrying his mother, in gratitude, as the story goes, for her staunch behavior during the occupation of Weimar by the French troops, after the Battle of Jena. The aging young man seems to have been a fairly good secretary and accountant for his father, although heavy on the bottle, but any slim paternal hope there may have been that his mind would expand in Rome was dashed by his death, within three weeks, of smallpox. The monument in this instance is more admirable than the life, with its bas-relief head by the famous sculptor Thorwaldsen looking quite imperial, although its model had been named for a mere duke and his liver was reported after the autopsy to be five times normal size, from drinking. Another version of the autopsy is that it revealed deformations of the brain, but both stories could be slander.

ROME was a home of the mind to all these people, probably even to August Goethe, as it was to the world—at least the world of the more or less privileged, and of the West, say from Jerusalem to Boston and Philadelphia and eventually San Francisco. Classical education had given it to them, as an extension of their living quarters, and a very real one; the experience of being there would be fifty-fifty discovery and recognition.

For actual living, insofar as he had any gift for that, Shelley was more comfortable in other parts of Italy. One can't imagine him settled in Rome, or anywhere else for that matter. Yet one feels his memory far from *depaysé* up against the old wall where his ashes—not his heart as many have been led to think by the words *Cor Cordium* on the stone—ended up after the cremation on the beach near Viareggio. He is rightfully there, and Rome had the right to receive him, more specifically than by the somewhat abstract justice of all the earth belonging to all people. *Prometheus Unbound*, high authorities to the contrary notwithstanding, is very far from his best poetry but was certainly one of his greatest efforts, in collaboration with—that is not stretching much—what were then the very lonely and overgrown ruins of the Baths of Caracalla. The "vastness" that so worked on him, and on Goethe, was of the time; the French Revolution and Napoleon have their part in the underlying craving and image, meat and drink to Shelley and which Keats had the sense to resist. Nowadays we don't think of using the word "vast" for the ocean, still less, to put it mildly, for the Colosseum; only the universe qualifies now, or a new variety of canned olives. Another Shelley word no longer with us and never much with Keats is "sublime." But all the vocabulary of his letter to his friend Thomas Love Peacock on those Baths tells the nature of his inspiration there, and something of the nature of his failure in it: steep mountains, immense labyrinth, pinnacles and masses, immensity, immense, chasm, enormous, lofty crags, peaks, vast desolation; ending with: "Come to Rome. It is a scene by which expression is overpowered; which words cannot convey." They couldn't and didn't, for him, but it was at least true that for his time, and his world-weary youth and bent of mind in his time, Rome and only Rome did provide the vastness, in works in stone and excesses of history, that might serve as stimulus and setting for the farthest flaunting of the human spirit, in scorn of every fetter and pettiness.

Not a bad idea; it only made for poor poetry and worse, or no, politics, of a kind needed to implement any such ideal. Nobody has expressed any opinion of Shelley since his death without getting into a hornet's nest; it can't be helped. The champions of *Prometheus Unbound* would have it that failure to admire has got to be a sign of our own inadequacies. That is asking for it; they have got to be secret messiah bugs, or never have breathed outside a library, so to mistake the intention for the deed. The deed as poetry. Those endless pages are one of the great white elephants of English literature, to be read, if they ever are outside the classroom or the addict's den, only because their author did far better on other occasions, not many, but a few. Keats was terribly right, if courteous, in his censure. But hush; this is a cemetery. He did do far better and that is why Severn's painting of him hard at work, that is gazing easelward, among the ruins, without a thought for vipers or malaria or any human vulnerability in spite of all the personal disasters already in his wake, can after all affect us, as his grave does. An extra fact about that, far from the key but still an important one for these days of "vast" willful ignorance—yes, here the word is all right—is that he *was* hard at work and had been all his life, with time out for one other sublimity but not much for food; his classical education was of the best, and his reading and reading habits seem to have been prodigious, perhaps more than Keats's. This tends to be forgotten by some of his

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would-be emulators on the Love-and-Liberty fronts.

Those peaks and chasms were not Browning's Rome or what he made of it at all, and would never have been Keats's. But they too knew their way around there, from long back. It is hard to take in, given Keats's age and the grueling years he put in on medical studies, how it was possible for him to have read as much and as deeply as he had. His powers of absorption, which would have been of little use without equally strong habits of work, were clearly abnormal if the word means anything. The autopsy report in his case refers to lungs, not deformations of the brain, but that organ must have had something unusual about it, of a beneficent if not blessed kind. Evidently, in the short time he had had, he had exposed himself much less to history than to literature including classical mythology, but that would do for a start and a very good start in Rome. Among the various *ifs* of his career that it is futile to speculate on is what he would have made of a healthy experience of the city, long enough for him to readjust the literary connotations and grow under that influence as he had under every other. It would have been nothing like the same exposure for Goethe, or Shelley either, that's certain, but then Keats was not like anyone else in anything; the charm and goodness of his nature alone would have set him apart, even without poetry, but for him there could be no such without. He had defined his life and it was that, though he would say of Fanny Brawne toward the end, "O that I could be buried near where she lives."

THERE was no time; he had really only the Rome in his head to be buried in. Few artists have been as lucky as he in their eventual biographers, notably for our period, in English, Bate, Gittings, and Ward. After their unusually heartfelt as well as thorough works, nothing remains to be said about the ghastly sea voyage with Severn to Naples, the further wretched days of quarantine there when he tried to divert the company with talk of the "classic Scenes he knew so well," the slow carriage journey, and the room in Rome. Somehow he lasted there, unwillingly since all hope was gone, just over three months. So was fulfilled his "languishment/ for skies Italian" of three years earlier. The sad travelers passed the Colosseum on their way into the city, but that seems to have been Keats's only sight of it, and all he could know of St. Peter's was the view of the dome from the top of the Spanish Steps. In the beginning some walks, in the near vicinity of Piazza di Spagna, and even a few slow horseback rides, were still possible, but although he would not let his engaging humor die and remained good company as long as he could, he was yearning for laudanum, not education. What he did see of the city that was big compared to some periods in the Middle Ages but tiny in the present-day scale—with a population of about 130,000—was a compound of beauty and decay that to many visitors was more depressing than uplifting. Oppression lay heavy on this Rome of Pius VII, though it is strange to find the word "monotonous" used by foreign observers for the life of the Roman people; but the large foreign colonies knew those people only as servants. Their own great poet, G. G. Belli, was to give a very different view of them. He was there, going on thirty, and could have regaled Keats with a most un-English kind of wit and class antagonism if he had ever heard of him, and if they had had any language to converse in.

The Caffé Greco on Via Condotti, scarcely two hundred yards from the door on Piazza di Spagna, is about the same age as the cemetery, and has had many of the same clientele. Indeed it had and still has in one or two respects something of the same atmosphere—of a pleasantly relaxed welcome transcending generations, without strain, and of privacy without loneliness. Accounts of the café's history have it that "Keats and Shelley" were often there. Disregarding the gross coupling of the names, a world habit too ingrained to be stopped, the statement cannot be accurate with regard to Keats. He was far too ill, though the café was a favorite place of foreign artists and he may have gone once or twice in the early weeks.

The house where he was more and more confined is of the 18th century and probably of the same date as the adjacent stairs, built by the French though named for Spain. It was bought early in this century by public subscription, through the efforts of Lord Rennell of Rodd and others including a number of English and American writers; the third floor, second by European counting, where Keats died, was officially opened as the Keats-Shelley Memorial in 1909. It is really a little library and museum of the English Romantic movement in general, but not many people stay to read. The bare little corner room, of the rosetted ceiling, is the one, for those who do know; it is a little Gettysburg of the history of poetry, and a conspicuous fact, as on the world's practical battlefields, is the number of people who have been moved to tears by it, however rarely they may have been anywhere else. Sinclair Lewis confessed to being one of those; one would not have expected it from the author of *Babbitt,* but he was a disturbed and complicated character, and "Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art," or almost any line from the three great odes, do in that place put a person's frailties up for sale. The legend on Keats's gravestone, beginning "Here lies all that was mortal of a young English poet," seems there more than ever a travesty; intended though it was, in the first disarray of sorrow, as an act of friendship. The key words of that inscription—"in the bitterness of his heart/ at the malicious power of his enemies"—reflect

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the disease, not the man, still less anything of the poet. There are no such words among those that crowd on the mind in the small room, as they do, from one of the most radiantly simple vocabularies ever put together in English. ". . . Keen, fitful gusts. . . ."; "while thy hook/ spares the next swath. . . ."; "with patient look,/ Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours. . . ."; "the small gnats mourn/ Among the river-sallows. . . ." Those *hours* in the plural —who else would have done it? And the line Robert Frost would borrow from: "And I have many miles on foot to fare." Another word one remembers is not Keats's own but from his young English doctor there, kind if incompetent, who spoke of him repeatedly as "noble."

In some respects his memory is better off in the cemetery than in the apartment now. The Barcaccia fountain that it pleased him to hear under his window cannot be heard for the traffic or often seen for the crowd of idle or just weary young, spillover from the steps, packed around it eating lunch or cooling their feet. Horses and carriages must have made other pleasant sounds outside the window, though muted by mud; the piazza is such a tourist center now, and the stairs up to Trinità dei Monti had been such an elegance for quite a while then, it is odd to think of its having been left uncobbled, whether to spite the French or just because it was out of the way—not to the English though; it was their central hangout. A more practical question is how the apartment was heated. There seem to have been sunny days, while Keats was still ambulatory, to justify the great English dream of sunny Italy as the cure for all that ailed their bodies or minds, but the thought of a Roman winter as a tuberculosis treatment is bound to appall anyone who has shivered through one in good health. Of course it was too late anyway; he could as well have died in Happy England among many friends instead of in a foreign place with a single one, and only Rome would have been the loser. No, Severn would have been that too, though he was half dead himself from the strain by the end.

THE museum had to take down its plaque and go secretive, like much of the city, during the nine months of German occupation in 1943-44. At night people would run for safety over the rooftops and many were hidden in houses in the neighborhood. Signora Vera Cacciatore, curator for several decades, has written about those vicissitudes in a pamphlet on the house, but not about her own and her husband's courage in protecting the valuable collection of manuscripts, letters, prints, etc. which could never have been brought together again, nor about one of the more ironic episodes of the period. The main treasures of the place were sent in two or three boxes for safekeeping, along with objects from other museums, to, of all places, the abbey of Monte Cassino, shortly to be one of the most totally pulverized buildings in Italy. A friendly priest, broadminded or who had not read much Shelley, rescued the boxes at the eleventh hour and brought them back, riding on a cart attached to the retreating Hermann Goering division. Immediately after the Allied entry the night of June 4-5, the identity of the building was restored and literary-minded English and Americans in uniform, and perhaps some who had never read much but felt drawn to a reminder of civilization at that juncture, began turning up. One who touched Signora Cacciatore particularly was an American who described himself as a student, who was assigned with another soldier to guard the house the first night. "He asked whether he might be allowed to go alone for one moment into the room where Keats died. He handed his rifle to his companion and, with a candle, went up the dark stairways and made his way around the dark rooms once occupied by Keats and Severn. . . ." Tears showed behind his glasses afterwards, understandably, whether he had come via Naples or Anzio.

Now people sometimes scurry for refuge for a different reason to the downstairs hall of the house. There are police roundups on the steps now and then, aimed at drug business or any selling without a license, so a good many run till it blows over. Some will be Italian, but more are young foreigners, from the self-appointed Lower Depths of our society. The Signora takes a charitable and motherly view of them on the whole; they have caused her no trouble; and it rather pleases her, perhaps because any literary recognition is better than none, that so many of the other young people who actually go up the stairs are above all entranced by mementos of William Godwin *(Political Justice,* free love; "Godwin-perfectability" as Keats put it), his daughter Mary Shelley *(Frankenstein),* and her mother Mary Wollstonecraft *(Vindication of the Rights of Woman).* For sex mores, Shelley's "Epipsychidion" would be timely too, leaving out the brainy side of bed-hopping, but that would require opening a book—inadvisable: it might reveal what a disagreeable hypocrite and money-grubber Godwin was, for instance. For sweet illusion's sake it is better for all this stuff, along with Byron's and Shelley's revolutionary and libertarian outpourings, to be more heard about than read, though it would be interesting to see what tags and scraps of the political notions of those well-heeled rebels would fit into the lowest-level current bombast of our maniacs of social protest, the kidnappers *et al.*, if they were only larded with scatology and obscenity every few words.

Byron saved himself from insipidity by turning to satire, and being quite good at it. Shelley, as Santayana wrote, was ineducable, "impervious to experience. . . . Being incapable of understanding reality, he reveled in creating world after world

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in idea" and if met by opposition was outraged and "cried aloud for liberty and justice." Santayana grants him genius, even sees this strange imperviousness as a condition of its particular kind, and so perhaps would have included the rest of the same syndrome, an identical procedure in love, of which Montaigne long before had written differently—it was not an invention of Shelley's: "Between ourselves I have constantly observed that there are two things which, strange to say, always go together: super-celestial feeling and subterranean morals. Such as dwell on the soul apart from the body design to get beyond themselves and escape from humanity. It is folly; instead of transforming themselves into angels they transform themselves into beasts."

One comes to feel there are two worlds up there in the Keats-Severn rooms, among the prints and framed letters and leather bindings—Shelley's "O world! o life! o time!" versus Keats's ". . . if a sparrow comes before my window I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel." But that is a bombastic thought, something less than half true. One unifying element, whatever the term Romantic for that period in poetry really means, is a common and peculiar intimacy with death. Something aside from all biographical facts; not Homeric; not that of people acquainted with plague or Hitler's camps or other massive assaults on life; not chivalric; not quite like any other period in literature. In Shelley's case the nearest to it is the kind of remark heard sometimes now from among the more desperate and degraded young, "Death might be a good trip." But Keats too, though so differently, seems to have been born into a loneliness somehow without antecedents; all sorts of good times and better didn't keep death from being half a friend, as against "the immortal sickness which kills not." Precisely in time for them, the mold had cracked, and they were the ones endowed enough to know it. Of course it is always cracking in one way or another, but more often in ways that produce, instead of poets, "mock lyrists, large self-worshipers . . . and careless Hectorers in proud, bad verse." It must have been some such background upheaval that gave both Keats and Shelley such ecstatic youthfulness in joy, as though they were the first ever to have seen sunlight on the sea, and in melancholy so prematurely old a view of "darkness, death and darkness," "where black gates were shut against the sunrise evermore."

THE funeral, on February 26, was held at or some time around dawn; that was sometimes permitted. The little group and the minister were all English. It is rather a long way from the house; the carriages would have started out in the dark, through many dismal streets, and probably nobody was in a mood to care that Saint Paul passed by the Pyramid when it was brand new, on the way to his beheading, as Paul that day can hardly have cared what sort of vulgar new shape of vanity it was. He wouldn't have seen the Aurelian Wall, with the gate the coffin vehicle and the others went through that morning in 1821; that didn't appear until the 3rd century, when there began to be a menace from northern people the Romans called barbarians; and the outer façade of the gate that we see now was put on still later, under Honorius in the 5th century. But it was all old and fine enough to provide the best kind of custody, and posterity, whatever its platitudes, would take care of the book reviewers. It has only not cared or dared to have Keats's inscription changed, the stone replaced if necessary, and there is no conceivable reason for that not to be done. The distortion of his image has been made a sacred cow by nothing but duration, and we have to trust there will be at least as much of that in store to sanctify the correction.

Severn and the poet's close friend Charles Brown, who collaborated in the extra words, came to have bitter compunction about it and wished to have them removed. Keats wanted to be past the need or confinement of a name and that at least was respected; his name is not on his stone, only on Severn's put beside it so many years later, as his friend, with the painter's adored two-year-old boy, dead from an absurd accident in his crib, between them. The lyre Severn designed for Keats's tomb, with half its strings missing as a sign of the unfinished life—as the Humboldts had set up broken stubs of columns by their small children's graves—is not intrusive, but for words there should obviously be none but the strangely simple ones he requested, which are only as modest as a person of great gift and soul and knowing his worth, unless nothing has any, should be: *"Here lies one whose name was writ in water."*

Shelley is generally said to have been a charmer, in friendship and society as in his aberrant love affairs, and he was indeed gracious toward the poet with whom he shares the chief glory of the cemetery. In a letter referring to his invitation to Keats to be his guest in Pisa, when he knew how ill he was and that everyone thought the only hope was Italy, he had written his well-known comment: "I am aware, indeed, in part that I am nourishing a rival who will far surpass me; and this is an additional motive and will be an added pleasure." It was generous. He liked being that, not counting tradesmen in the human picture, mainly doing evil through obtuseness about some obvious facts of life, sexual and other; one such fact was that Keats was never at ease in his company. To that precise mind and rigorous heart, the verbalizings must have seemed as sloppy as the life, the charm finally wearisome. It would have been the perfection of agony in his dying to be beholden to that tormented household.

The discomfort would be far more than intel-

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lectual, but strong that way too. Keats was himself, as far as might be compatible with poetry, of those to whom "the miseries of the world/ Are misery, and will not let them rest," a tribe never to be confused with "fanatics," who "weave a paradise for a sect." "Only the dreamer envenoms all his days"—and the days of those closest to him. Yet his new volume *Lamia,* the pages turned back to the "Eve of St. Agnes," was one of two books found in Shelley's pockets when the body washed up on shore the next year—the other was a volume of Sophocles—and *Adonais* is perhaps Shelley at his best, though interminable and with few single lines as good as those leading up to the "pestilence-stricken multitudes" of the "Ode to the West Wind." It more than atones for his skylark, but then Keats had poems to live down too and succeeded even less, if less pretentiously, in any long one, though he was coming close to mastery of the form in the second *Hyperion*: a nearly insuperable business, without the dramatist's or storyteller's art and with traditional stuff of the epic gone, to be replaced from scratch or Greek mythology.

As tribute to Keats, *Adonais* is more skittish, even without Shelley's letter to Byron apologizing for having perhaps overrated the dead poet's talents and explaining on what grounds, of sympathy in his mistreatment by the press, he had been so carried away. On that score he had reason to feel a passionate fraternity, but it was with far deeper reference that he had written, as his widow Mary mourned, "his very own elegy." The chronic obtuseness is there, about Keats's true nature and strength, and the Doric variant of the spelling of Adonis gives a remove from common associations with that beautiful youth more needed for a self-image than an objective one. The Adonis associations *per se* are, except for the Death and Resurrection theme, much more in line with his own character, of the two: being fought over by two goddesses, one of them Aphrodite; death-wish versus voluptuous amour; the ritual of the young man's image being thrown into the sea, and so on. A well-felt and skillful elegy it is nonetheless, and although this is a triviality as against its impact, it speaks well for certain basic decencies, along with the lasting attainments, of the Romantic movement. Even Byron, vile about Keats, was up to some decent fits of loyal rage concerning Shelley—"hooted from his country like a mad dog for questioning a dogma"; which was a fashionable stance and not quite the whole story, but was close enough to do them both credit.

The irony of Shelley's dying so soon after seems slight; death at sea was suitable for him, and surely the time of it suited him. He too has a stone to one of his children, the little boy William, beside his, and the year-old Clara had died in Italy; so had Byron's and Claire's beautiful five-year-old daughter Allegra to whom Shelley had been attached, victim of a father's self-infatuation as those other children were not. That was not Shelley's vice; self-indulgence and self-deception were and they figure in his own children's deaths. However there are many children of conventional parents in the cemetery and if one can speak of murder, especially in regard to Clara and Allegra, it is only in the sense of lethal conflict of interest. Before that for Shelley there had been the suicide of his first wife, "poor Harriet" as we have come to think of her, and the other suicide, of Fanny Imlay, and God knows what and what deaths in Naples, behind the so-called Hoppner scandal. Beyond the general Romantic familiarity with death, at the age of nearly thirty he was terribly familiar with the real thing, as Keats was from a quite different process—of nursing his dying brother Tom—and ready for it in soul, as Keats was only because his lungs were destroyed. One was beginning, the other burned out. But they are companions in one extraordinary fact, of other companionship. Edward Trelawny, who was to survive his friend Shelley by fifty-nine years, as Severn survived Keats by fifty-eight, has the neighboring stone.

ALREADY in 1822 what is called the "antique" part of the cemetery, where Keats was interred, was closed for any more graves except by very special permission, so Shelley's ashes were placed, five months after the burning on the beach, in the new part; a consular official, Mr. Freeborn, had had to keep them quite a while in a cellar at his office, while he waited to come across an English minister kind enough to officiate for an atheist. Trelawny arrived in Rome soon after, disliked the spot as being in a crowd of the nondescript, and had them moved to where they are now, in an embrasure of the old wall at the top of the hill. He first meant to have inscribed on the stone an epitaph in Latin by Leigh Hunt but changed his mind in favor of the not much more appropriate lines from *The Tempest,* "Nothing of him that doth fade. . . . ," etc. which are not exactly *sub specie aeternitatis* since everybody knows Ariel is speaking there of a pretended, not a real death; but perhaps Shelley would have liked that. In larger letters, under the poet's name, is the baffling *Cor Cordium,* endlessly referred to but that seems unidentified as to source, unless Hunt made it up. Trelawny paid for the plot, later a cause of dispute between heirs of both, and installed his own blank stone, mystification of tourists until nearly the end of the century. An odd aspect of both these sets of associated graves is that neither Severn nor Trelawny was among the older or closer friends of the poet they chose a long lifetime later to be buried beside. Severn was hardly more than an acquaintance of Keats's when they set out for Italy, though as a serious artist himself he was worthy of the intensities of the en-

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suing months—some of the friends back in England didn't think so—and must have come to feel them as the crux of his own life; whatever Mrs. Severn thought of it, she was buried earlier in Marseilles. Trelawny, the outgoing cheerful buccaneer, adventurer, no artist but sensitive to Shelley's mental stimulation and perhaps more so as they say now to his life-style, had known him only about six months, but for him too it was a high point of life that no number of amorous and other affairs would ever beat.

A tangle of legend and conflicting stories soon grew up around the events preceding Shelley's burial, and persists; not that it matters except as a sample of the waywardness of human records and memory, especially under the seduction of big names. It is often heard that Byron burned the body on the beach, and it is true that he was there, and at the same rite for Shelley's friend and co-mariner Williams the day before, along with Leigh Hunt who had just arrived in Italy and various Italian officials and policemen to keep back curious onlookers, but it was Trelawny who arranged everything; evidently about that he can be believed. The third corpse from the boat, of the hired eighteen-year-old English boy, was not burned but buried in quicklime on the beach, as the others were too for five weeks before the burning; this was according to sanitary regulations, based on extraordinary dread of contamination from ships. So far the stories jibe, except as to the exact places involved. The onlookers are described either as "villagers" or as "well-dressed." In the legend that stuck, Trelawny burned his hand snatching Shelley's heart from the flames; in his first account, he and others, using metal poles since they were not allowed to touch anything and it was too hot anyway, carried the metal grill holding the fire into the sea to cool it; he then in curiosity about one part not having been consumed, burned himself pulling out an oily organ that modern speculation suggests may have been the liver but that in the guise of heart was to cause some strange jealousies and acrimonies as it changed hands; whatever it was went to Mary and eventually to Boscombe, England. Byron wanted the skull but Trelawny, knowing he had used another as a drinking cup, did not want it so profaned; besides in the digging up of the body it had been struck by a mattock and later fell into two pieces.

The whole appearance of the body as dug up was described as nauseating, with details; the official Italian records, brought to light by Dr. Biagi at the end of the century, give it as nothing but bones, though it would seem that the heart story must have had something more than that to go on. That Shelley, who couldn't swim, was a nincompoop as a sailor and in general inept physically seems agreed, more than why his and Williams's boat got to be named the "Don Juan," as a bit of enforced loyalty to Byron, instead of the "Ariel" as Shelley had wanted, and the two reports of how it was brought up from the bottom, and how far out, differ totally. As to digging up the child William's remains in the cemetery so they could be by his father's, in one version the grave was found to contain bones of someone five-and-a-half-feet tall; in another, no trace of it could be found. In any case, that third stone marks a memory, not a grave, and Mary, who first spoke of wanting to be buried there—Trelawny jauntily wrote her, "You may lie on the other side if you like"—eked out a fairly long, churchgoing widowhood in England and was buried in Bournemouth, having written a good deal without ever recapturing the flash of *Frankenstein*. Her main occupation seems to have been building up an image of Shelley as the moral and conventional character he would have shuddered even to meet at a party —he couldn't stand being "bored by idle ladies and gentlemen"; a job taken over for the next generation by their only, and commonplace, surviving child, Sir Percy, and even more by his strenuous and propriety-bugged wife, Lady Shelley.

In 1910 the director of the cemetery, Signor Trucchi, gave an account of the Shelley plot, beginning with a reference to 1823. "At that time the administration of the affairs of the cemetery was very irregular and the name of the purchaser of the ground remained unregistered, but my father remembered having been told of the purchase. Many years passed and as I had never heard from the owner of the ground I supposed that he had died. To my great surprise, however, in the latter part of 1880 I received from England a letter signed Trelawny, in which the writer stated that, as he was the owner of the plot of ground near the grave of Shelley and that, as he was now an old man and could not expect to live much longer, he thought it was time for him to prepare his grave. He gave me an idea of the measurement of the box that would contain his ashes. . . ." Trelawny was then eighty-eight. In October of the next year, 1881, an English lady turned up unannounced, with the box, "about four o'clock in the afternoon," but as she had known nothing about needing certain official documents she had to take it home with her, presumably to a hotel room. Everyone was very kind, and within a fortnight Trelawny was "moored at last on the stormless shore," as Swinburne had already expressed it immediately after the old man's death in August ("Lines on the Death of Edward John Trelawny"). "Heart of hearts, art thou moved not, hearing/ Surely, if hearts of the dead may hear,/ Whose true heart it is now draws near?/Surely the sense of it thrills thee, cheering/ Darkness and death with the news now nearing—/ Shelley, Trelawny joins thee here."

The Swinburne pathos is of course only one of several varieties of Shelley-worship that have gone on ever since his death. One form, somewhat in

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line with the efforts of the widow and her daughter-in-law, shows up in the contortions of an otherwise sober biographer, in the 1940's, to dispel any thought that having once eloped with Mary, Shelley could possibly have been such a cad as to sleep with anybody else. The disease seems to be most acute among pedants and the near-illiterate, whether on metaphysical or some vague version of political grounds; the poetry as poetry gets rather lost in the swoon. George Bernard Shaw, no swooner in general, in his Fabian youth took part in some Shelleyite gatherings, while knowing that *The Cenci* was an abominable play. By and large it appears to be neither ideas nor work but the life, with its peculiar brand of non-conformism, that gets people, under Victorian restraints or the contrary, though of course the idea of the work, and the idea of the ideas, have to be there to ennoble it all. For cult purposes, below the Demogorgon orbit, Shelley's own statement about his "passion to reform the world" is really all that is needed. Such is sainthood, and there is always somebody to make money from it. There has been over some generations a lucrative market in Shelley forgeries, also in such relics as locks of hair, presumably false, not to mention the portrait of the poet as Christ, after a model by Leonardo. Of course the Shelley-haters have had their innings too, though never again as in his lifetime; the Rossettis and Co. put them in left field. But it is far less the witless detractors than the idolaters who drive the best of the poetry, and the best that must have been there in the man, out of sight, and it has to be for the best that one grieves.

One Shelley biographer, John Addington Symonds, came to be buried beside the Pyramid (1893), not from idolatry but because he was often in Rome and happened to die there. One among later biographers was not so lucky, and may be taken as a small footnote to the story, for which the principal can't be held responsible; yet his spirit hovers over it, and on the Swinburne theory, would no doubt be shaking its head. The book, two heavy volumes published in 1927, avoids the more blatant sexual exculpations of its successor, partly because it was the "Epipsychidion" side of the matter, with or without Intellectual Beauty, that made the scholar in the case feel more equipped than most to deal with that particular poetic soul. He found sanction there, as others have, for his own worst failings, and it brought him no end of grief. His name was Walter E. Peck. He was a tall gangly man, of rather noble brow and flaccid lips, quick gregarious humor, and impetuous energy. He was a professor at Hunter College, then for women only, and he made the most of the fact, until, after various scandals including a charge of bigamy, he was fired. By 1938 he had run through handouts from friends and was down to begging from acquaintances; he would bring the plea by phone down from a dollar to a quarter and if the person called could no longer bear to see him would wait outside for the coin to be thrown to him in the street. Then he disappeared, to turn up some years later as a hopeless but cheerful and still learned alcoholic on skid row, otherwise known as "one mile of hell." In that neighborhood he was liked and respected, was known as The Professor, hung out with a coterie of kindred fallen intellectuals at a place called The Pitcher Joint, and when in condition sometimes wrote or lectured for the *Bowery News*. A sociology class at N.Y.U. went to interview a group of Bowery bums, who returned the visit in the classroom a few weeks later, because they were paid for it, not out of any wish to mend their ways, according to the New York *Times* account. Walter Peck, Oxford D. Phil., was one of them, and was described as *claiming* to have written a life of Shelley. But that was cleared up for the obituary, in January 1954, when he had been found unconscious in a Bowery doorway. His *Shelley* was in all big libraries, and still is. He was buried in whatever we use for a Potter's Field.

Caius Cestius, for whom the Pyramid was built, wasn't exactly a nobody. He was a praetor, tribune of the people and member of the college of the Septemviri *epulones*, the group in charge of providing the sacrificial feasts of the gods, and he must have fancied himself extremely and been very rich. Thomas Hardy in 1887 hit on a way of thinking about him, which might not go down too well with the Germans, Swedes, Scandinavians, and other citizens of the world through love of Rome, in fact to an unkind view it might seem chauvinistic. But it does express a phenomenon very pertinent to that piece of ground and that is going to be with us for at least another few thousand years if we are going to get that much; i.e., being buried on what is called foreign soil can as well be a cheerful thought as not and has many special attractions in this case, but native language is a home hard to do without. Keats knew it well: "Since every man whose soul is not a clod/ Hath visions, and would speak, if he had loved,/ And been well nurtured in his mother tongue." Hardy's poem on the Pyramid is not one of his best, but then one scarcely thinks of him as comfortable on the continent at all, or in any metropolis. "Who, then, was Cestius,/ And what is he to me?/ I can recall no word/ Of anything he did;/ For me he is a man who died and was interred/ To leave a pyramid// Whose purpose was exprest/ Not with its first design,/ Nor till, far down in Time, beside it found their rest/ Two countrymen of mine." He calls the two "those matchless singers" and "two immortal shades," and sees the Pyramid as beckoning pil-

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grims to their tombs "with marble finger high." Shelley in *Adonais* saw it a little differently: "And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime . . . doth stand/ Like flame transformed to marble. . . ." Both descriptions are bizarre, and the monument would not look like much in Egypt. Still, its geometry is beautiful, more so in contrast to all other shapes in Rome, and with acquired beauty far beyond that. We do have reason to be grateful to Cestius, who "in life, maybe,/ Slew, breathed out threatening."

CEMETERIES are a dying institution. Long before we are all talking Urth-spk or whatever our one world language is to be, we will all have to be writ in water, for lack of ground, or strewn in wonder-working ashes on whatever soil is left. Considering the present population of Rome this seems rather imminent at Campo Verano, but not beside the Pyramid, where there is still a good deal of room and no such pressure. You don't feel pushed for time there, and again as at the Caffé Greco can enjoy the company with some feeling of leisure, especially as it is all more or less contemporary. As against the Pyramid and even the Aurelian Wall of two hundred years later, which can be lumped together as representing about two-fifths of recorded human history—not speaking of artifacts—the others we are concerned with can be thought of as only having a different number on the same short street; they are our very close neighbors in time.

There are about four thousand of them now, and as such things go, the Achievers among them do make up quite an eminent group. Alexandria may never have had such a university; the rude forefathers of the hamlet, or the slums either, were never less represented. The prevailing odor for the imagination along many of these little paths is of tons of bookdust, though the lives and, it may be, the untimely misfortunes of the rich and beautiful are apt to be more dramatized, often in the kind of pseudo-classical sculpture that adorned the gardens of the 19th century, or in long inscriptions, about the virtues of the deceased and the precariousness of human fate. One of those, relating the death of a young society beauty in a riding mishap, is the story there that most affected Henry James "irresistibly, as a case for tears on the spot." In general, his sympathy among the graves was keenest for the transients caught up by "trouble within trouble," from "misfortune in a foreign land," which comes oddly from one of our most renowned expatriates. One wonders what he would have made, two generations later, of Isabel Brown: "The Faithful Lizzie. For forty-two years devoted maid of the Marchesa Malaspina." It was good of the Marchesa to put in her real name, and for all we know they may have had a beautiful relationship.

Lizzie is in a category by herself in the cemetery. So is one German lady, who ended a very long life in Rome and who forms an odd little link, on the politico-philosophical side, between Shelley, beacon or windbag of dissent as one cares to see it, and the tragic victim of Mussolini buried near him a century and a quarter later, the Marxist leader Antonio Gramsci. Malwida von Meysenbug, a political exile from her native Hesse, was of the company of the Romantic Revolutionaries, a friend of the Russian socialist forerunner Alexander Herzen, and of Mazzini and Wagner. She was born two years after Waterloo, six before Shelley's death, and when Garibaldi, whom she came to know, was a boy of nine in Nice. The young Romain Rolland, whose correspondence with her has been published, was a friend of her old age in Rome, where he used to play the piano for her, and his was one of the prominent names in the international outcry in the early 1930's against the atrocious conditions of imprisonment of Gramsci, already many years in prison and then close to death.

The mounting protests from abroad had some effect, but they were too late. Gramsci, a hunchback whose health had never been good, was transferred from the prison near Bari to a prison clinic farther north, and later to one in Rome. There, though still under guard, he had relative freedom, since any one of several diseases tormenting him was enough to finish him off soon and prevent his being dangerous to the Fascist regime meanwhile. He had been so weak for a year and a half that nobody had dared tell him about his mother's death, at home in their village in Sardinia. He had gone on writing and sending messages to her and was perplexed at her not answering—by dictation, as she herself had never learned to read and write. His term was to expire on April 21, 1937, and those left at home, including his aged father, were wild with joy and plans to receive him because for once in his embattled life he was going there to rest instead of back into the struggle. It was too late for him to go anywhere. He died on the 27th, at the age of forty-six. His father, who had never tried to follow the politics of that one and another of his seven children, tore his hair and beard and struck himself like a madman on hearing the news, shouting, "Assassins! they've killed my son! they've killed him!" He survived only two weeks. Antonio, as anticlerical as he was critical of the zealots of opposition to the Catholic Church—"anti-clerical pornography" was a phrase he used—could be buried beside the Pyramid because his wife Giulia, then and for years back in Moscow with their two young children, was considered a Russian, though her family was of Swedish origin and had lived for long periods in Rome. Her letters to him had become impersonal and far between a long time before and he had never seen their younger son. In the one carriage that followed the hearse in the rain there were only one of his brothers and

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his devoted sister-in-law Tatiana, human mainstay, with no reward beyond brotherly affection, of his ten and a half years in prison.

Now that Gramsci is published and read around the world, the look in history of the tyrant and bully who killed him, as he did so many others who couldn't toe or sideslip the cynical line of the time, is of course no more ironic than that of Gramsci's own cause. At his death he was still in some vague sense a leader of the Communist party, a party that could scarcely be said to exist under the circumstances; he was appointed to the top leadership by the Comintern in Moscow, which he was visiting as a delegate, in 1923, after the arrest of all the Executive Committee in Italy, less than a year after Mussolini's March on Rome. A warrant was out for his arrest too, but the next year he was elected a Communist deputy, one of nineteen, and took the risk of returning to Italy with "parliamentary immunity"—a safeguard blown up within a few weeks by the murder of the socialist deputy Matteotti. The Communist leaders were arrested, or fled into exile, not long after.

That Gramsci would have parted company with those who clung to the Soviet mystique through its nightmare convulsions there seems little reason to doubt, though the Italian Communist party continues to claim him as an exclusive intellectual property and heir to Lenin's thought, as though his writings had been of ten, twenty, or thirty years later than they were. Ignazio Silone, of very different temperament, who broke with the party in 1928, has lately said that Gramsci was a man who had "improved, intellectually and spiritually, in prison." That could only mean growth in independence of mind, with the further implication that such growth might, the mind being willing and able, be easier to come by in the stark ultimacies of prison solitude than in the vanity-feeding hurly-burly of everyday politics. Gramsci's mind was willing; and that it remained able to the end, in a body so nearly destroyed, subject to periodic blankouts along with chronic fever and other more painful symptoms, is a mark of a heroism not often within human capacity.

By 1933, having refused to bow by requesting a pardon, he began to be haunted by a dread of becoming so worn down by disease that he would no longer be the same person and would give in. "You hear it said, 'He's held out five years, why not six?' . . . The truth is that a man in the 5th year is not the one he was in the 4th, the 3rd, the 2nd, etc. He is a new personality . . . in whom precisely the years passed have destroyed the moral restraints, the strength of resistance that characterize the man of the 1st year. A typical example is that of cannibalism" (Letter from prison). Stalin's monstrous purges, that would give such thoughts a reference beyond anything dreamed of in Italy, were just getting into full swing at the time of Gramsci's death. It seems inconceivable that once exposed again to news, books, conversation, he would not have made the extrapolation from his own sufferings, or would have needed them, for a true judgment, in spite of the most intense paternal feelings about his two sons who were being brought up as Young Pioneers.

Scholars will judge what his writings amount to, as a contribution to Marxist theory, and as critiques of Croce and other philosophical mentors of Gramsci's various stages of development. His literary comments, as on Tolstoy, Chekhov, Dante, are certainly not free of the gross social-purpose criteria of Soviet-oriented circles in the 20's and 30's; and the stock political phrases, "dictatorship of the proletariat," "withering away of the state," etc., like the view of trade unions as a revolutionary force, are sadly outdated now. Yet his curiosities had always been wide-ranging, and on subjects not crusted over with Moscow-line orthodoxy both his thinking and his style can be very pungent.

One such subject, a minor one but big biographically, was the upsurge of banditry in his native Sardinia toward the end of the 19th century, when pressure from northern Italian industrialists had brought tariff regulations that cut off the island's agricultural exports, especially to France. In the suddenly ruined economy, miserable enough before, both crime and Sardinian nationalism were bound to boom. "Elementary terrorism," the grown man would call the highway holdups, kidnappings, cattle rustling: an anarchic and futile misconception of "the class struggle," but he would vividly recall the romantic hold of the big bandit names of the time on such schoolboys as himself. Peasant and village families, not his own but like them in their grinding poverty, sheltered and protected those assassin "heroes," and quite a few intellectuals joined in the adulation (G. Fiori, *Vita di Antonio Gramsci*, 1966).

Not foreign intellectuals; nor would most of them have condemned the bandits with much understanding either; that was not *their* Italy. The nearly incredible conditions of life of Sardinian miners and their first efforts to revolt were also basic to Gramsci's youth, and like the rest of his upbringing, pertain to an aspect of the country to which Byron and Shelley in their time were as oblivious as any other English aristocrat. But then so does the whole life of this man, deformed in body, who spent his early years close to starvation in order to feed his mind, becoming at one stage the white hope of philology at least for the professors in Turin, and the last ten and a half no less determined to keep that mind intact, while his liver was as good as pecked out by a vulture. Shelley's Prometheus does have that much reference after all; it applies—so does Byron's properly forgotten "Prisoner of Chillon"—even while giving for our time, somewhat less

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clearcut than either his or Gramsci's, an oversimplified idea of who Jupiter is.

In Keats's section of the cemetery there are still some of the violets and daisies he loved, though even before Severn's death the flowers were being stolen in quantity from around the grave. Where Gramsci's simple stone is, in the new part, there is no room for turf, but iris and azaleas and oleanders bloom in every sort of patch and crevice, in a tumble of ivy, among the stones with names and the ones without, that serve to hold up the narrow terraces. The body of George Santayana, who in his last years was cared for by nuns on the Aventine and who had called Catholicism a "vista" for his imagination, was on the grounds for one night in 1952, in the mortuary chapel; apparently he had wished to be buried in unconsecrated ground, which caused some confusion or resistance by the authorities, and it took a day of finagling by the Spanish consul to arrange for burial in the communal Tomb of Spaniards at Campo Verano. Beside the Pyramid, one of the additions of the last decade is the grave of an American painter of talent who committed suicide, and if there is a loneliness to be felt, a sense of all this being, as Henry James put it, in a foreign land, it is that grave and Gramsci's that seem to qualify as well as any. Gramsci is one of the very few there buried in his own country, but he is not among his own people, either by nationality or conviction. But then if he had stayed in the land of his convictions he would probably have died sooner and more violently and had no grave at all.

There is no great carousing any more at the foot of Mount Testaccio, only a few Gypsy wagons halted there from time to time as a base for begging operations, and the district around and far beyond the Pyramid is a screeching turmoil of traffic. A mystery, among so many, is the quiet that strikes as soon as you turn the last corner before the cemetery gate; there did come to be a gate, because donors gave a wall and by that time it was permitted. Stones of a different association have come to light in this century, to add to whatever solace may derive from the others, of a lovely shade of gray and rounded by innumerable rubbings of feet and hoofs and wheels; they make up a section of the ancient Via Ostiensis, the street Saint Paul walked over on his last day, to the place where the three fountains would spring up in his memory. Those stones, of the old thoroughfare, are fenced off now way below the level of the cemetery and next to the base of the Pyramid, so the cats that manage to make their way in there from their main habitat on the noisy piazza side can prowl over them without being able to get up among the graves. They do it in slow gingerly steps, because it is not the kind of footing they are used to. They have to explore, and wonder, try not to do anything foolish, and in time return to the food supply on the unquiet side.

They couldn't care less what part they play in our reconciliation. But some of those whose names are on the ground above knew once, in their time, what it was to be on the receiving end in that charmed precinct: "Free from all pain, if wonder pain thee not," "Rich in the simple worship of a day."

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Molière and Magic

Jack Richardson

Les Fourberies de Scapin is not one of Molière's great plays. Put together to keep his troupe employed while they waited for the scenery to be prepared for *Psyché,* the elaborate tragedy-ballet that Louis XIV had ordered, it is a hodgepodge of borrowings and outright thefts. Terence, Plautus, and bits from the *Comedia dell' arte* are all thrown into the pot, and even the play's most famous scene—*Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?*—was pilfered from Molière's contemporary, Cyrano de Bergerac. A play slapped together in such a manner has obviously no time for formal subtleties or deep characterization; no theatrical personifications of human behavior can emerge, no *Misanthrope, Bourgeois Gentilhomme,* or *Don Juan* can be created. It is a farce that seems, like hundreds of others put on in the 17th century, filled with stock intrigues, misconceptions, and ready-made routines. Even Boileau who, next to Louis XIV himself, was Molière's most influential champion, found *Scapin* hard to take, and professed that he could not believe that the same man who had written *Le Misanthrope* also composed this patched-together series of low comic moments. And if number of performances and box-office receipts are any guide, then it seems that *Scapin* was not even a popular success: it was staged only eighteen times during Molière's lifetime, and did little more than pay for itself on each occasion.

And yet, for all of its supposed faults, *Scapin* has endured, not simply because a great playwright wrote it and therefore sent it on to posterity on the backs of his masterpieces, but because in *Scapin* there are such basic farcical situations, situations unencumbered by any real plot or serious moral, that both actors and audience find themselves set loose in a timeless comedic setting, a world of punchlines that wait for jokes to be improvised around them. Molière may have pirated his materials, but he was a marauder with a fastidious eye who pilfered only those situations that had proven their comic worth and durability. His age, which worshipped novelty on the one hand and classical purity on the other, found neither in *Scapin*; ours, which worships everything with both hands, generally has no time for such fundamental examples of art.

Nevertheless, three hundred years after its debut, here is *Scapin,* now titled *Scapino* in the English adaptation by Frank Dunlop and Jim Dale, confounding both ages by playing on a Broadway stage to capacity houses. All the rough pranks and foolishness that Molière and his fellow actors must have engaged in while dashing through the twists of circumstance that pass for a plot, still form a penumbral text about the play, a text which the present production cagily uses in order to force laughter from those who know the history of farcical style as well as from those innocents who think they're enjoying a revival of a clever play rather than the rudiments of comedy itself. The manner of this production, a manner far removed from the fluid precision with which the Comédie Française treats such works, is as basic as the play's sources. It is simple low buffoonery that makes us at first wince a little while we laugh, for we imagine we should know better than to be amused by such time-worn gimmicks. Soon, however, we begin to share the actors' joy at being allowed a respite from good taste, and we accept as artistically correct anything that bustles us into laughter.

The play's chief bustler is, of course, Scapino. He is a character with a history that dates from the

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origins of comedy, a dramatic figure who represents nothing except the intrigues and duperies necessary to lively farce. Although Molière describes him as a rogue, there is really no human mischief about him. He is like a benevolent Iago, a manipulator without reason who is compelled only by comic necessity. Like the play he gives his name to, he is most vital when embroiled in layers of humorous deceit, lies, and misstatements. Even when he beguiles a miserly employer into a situation where he must suffer a servant's blows, Scapino delivers the thrashing not as a triumphing individual but as an appealing comic tradition. He *is* the stock situation of the tables being turned, of the slave's craftiness besting the master's position and power. In short, Scapino is a theatrical rather than a human representation, a device in need of an actor capable of using it to suit his own purpose.

It is no surprise that Scapino, not being human himself, is surrounded with obstacles rather than characters. That the lovers he is laboring to help are fools and the fathers he is trying to outwit misers, means simply more technical difficulties for his conniving genius to overcome. Of course, a little obligatory sport is made of addled lovers and hard-hearted skinflints, but neither parsimony nor passion is really the comic issue. Rather, these qualities are threats to Scapino's success: the lovers' simplemindedness to the delicate balance in which he keeps his lies; the fathers' tightfistedness to the successful working of his stratagems. Even that famous *galère* scene in which Scapino manages to wheedle money out of one of the fathers in order to ransom his son who, so Scapino lies, is being held prisoner on a Turkish galley, depicts not so much a man desperate to put off parting with his gold as it does an actor determined to put off parting from the stage and allowing the action to continue without him. A half-dozen times the old man starts after the money Scapino needs to keep his plots moving, but each time he stops and demands to know what the devil his son was doing on a Turkish boat, thus forcing Scapino to repeat the tale. Of course it is a miser procrastinating over the payment of money, but it is more importantly a marvelous juxtaposition of styles. Someone is trying to make sense out of Scapino's farce, and in doing so is breaking his rhythm, causing him to stumble over and over again in the same place—in short, slowing down the action. The scene is classic because it is farce itself that is trying to overcome the ponderous demands of common sense, and we laugh not so much at a miser's agony as at the contrast of two absurdly different realities.

THE actor who attempts to use the device of Scapino must depict then not a character but a comic action, and his battles with timing, props, and the capricious responses of audiences become as much a part of the play's "plot" as Scapino's struggles with the attitudes of common sense and careless sentiment. As Scapino improvises his way from situation to situation, so the actor who plays him should convey the same unplanned daring —even if every accident and aside has been carefully worked out.

Jim Dale, one of the brightest talents of the Young Vic, is an actor who understands the nature of the farce he is demonstrating. Perhaps because he has been a singer, comedian, and dancer, he is quite at ease confronting an audience without the buffer of a character between them. Dressed in a white linen suit which he wears, despite its poor fit and wrinkles, with a Neapolitan swagger, Dale slithers, twists, twirls, and bounces effortlessly about the stage with the exaggerated, somewhat melancholy, elegance of the true *farceur*. When he is not prodding the play's action, he is engaged in amiable cajolery of the audience, and when involved in neither of these enterprises, he sings the music he composed for the play and accompanies himself, with inept abandon, on the guitar. The way Dale moves from asides to impromptu comments and then back to ordinary dialogue demonstrates theatrical trickery at its best, and he turns the most sophisticated spectator into a groundling who cheers the hero, abuses the villain, and in general treats the play as if it were a streetcorner incident. In his rumpled meridional suit, using a cockney voice, and swept along by scenes put together by French genius, Dale is the personification of the most enduring quality in Western humor—artful naiveté. His performance, like farce itself, is all innocence and calculation, and it is pleasant to find that there are still actors about who appreciate the theater's surfaces as well as its depths.

The rest of the production is suitably broad and antic. The director, Frank Dunlop, has been as eclectic as the play's author in his additions to the text. As an example of his embellishments, I'll mention a brief moment when a Neapolitan waiter begins singing, in the tones of an Irish tenor, "Galway Bay." Scapino, on stage at the time, is mulling over future acts of deviousness when he hears the music. For a moment he seems taken aback, not by the Irish lilt to the waiter's voice, but by the interruption of his comic schedule. But then, deciding that the interlude is being well-received and deserves therefore expansion, he joins in for a chorus or two. Boileau, if he had not already left, would make his exit at this point in the evening. Molière, who understood the crude foundations of his art, might have sung along.

SINCE we are speaking about the theater's raw material, it is a good moment to mention another production now enjoying a success on Broadway. *The Magic Show* is listed in theater guides as a musical comedy, but we can at once forget about the music and a good deal of the comedy. Except for the performance of David Ogden Stirs as a rundown magician burdened with an aging rabbit and a repertoire of three bad tricks, there is no real humor in *The Magic Show*, and the musical numbers, besides being rendered inaudible in untrained voices are for the most part undistinguished imitations of popular modes. Doug Henning, the young magician about whom the show has been built, has a stage presence that could be described as amiably dim; he smiles continuously, opens his eyes wide to simulate interest in what's going

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on around him, speaks in a thin, reedy voice and performs his magic with annoying self-effacement. But as a magician his performance is incredible. Without going into a disquisition on how the theater is based on tricks and illusions, I will only say that as Henning saws a lady in half or makes handkerchiefs dance in and out of a bottle to a rumba tempo, I felt a certain ingenuous enjoyment settling over me, a will-less suspension of disbelief that, as it did at *Scapino*, allowed me, without self-consciousness, to become for a time simply a happy audience. One knows that theater magic, like farce, is carefully contrived to appear an effortless wonder, but if there's excellence in the skills involved, the contrivance soon overpowers us, changing what we know to be into something much more marvelous, something that confounds and delights us by its naked chicanery. It has been often said that movies robbed the theater of breathtaking illusions and incredible scenes. Not so; for films are the result of technical achievements, and once a train runs over us on the screen, we accept that it can be done just as we accept the uses of electricity, and at the third or fourth viewing are as amused as we would be by seeing a light bulb switched on and off. The tricks that can be performed on stage, on the other hand, derive their power out of their human simplicity. Although we know we're going to be duped, we still do not believe that this time we will be. Yet there is always delight when once more we are, and soon we stop looking for wires and mirrors and begin to believe again in the power of human adroitness. It is this power which is the special provenance of the theater, and which requires that there be nothing but thin air between the spectator and the illusion he watches.

At *The Magic Show*, you will see feats that defy scientific explanation. You will see the marvelously modest young Henning make a woman lie in supine comfort on the tips of three giant Persian scimitars, and then rise unscathed into the air in defiance of the mundane laws of gravity. You will witness displays of conjuring never before seen by ordinary mortals; beautiful women will appear from the thinnest ether attired in the thinnest raiment. And for your special delectation and amusement, one of these exquisite ladies, even as you stare in wonder at the celestial perfection of her physical proportions, will be turned—not into something as insignificant as a rabbit or a piece of Swiss cheese, but into a genuine, living-and-breathing, 100 per cent alive South American puma. Ladies and Gentlemen, need I say more in recommending a profitable way to spend an evening.

Movies

The Importance of "Duddy Kravitz"

William S. Pechter

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz is a lumpy, styleless film made from a lumpy, styleless novel, yet it seems to me important. Telling the story of an ambitious young man, a budding entrepreneur, on the make in Montreal's Jewish ghetto, circa 1948, Mordecai Richler's novel, I thought, found its literary level with the Wouks and Weidmans; Sammy runs indefatigably all right, but, aside from the most tritely familiar signposts (he lacked love), one never knows why, and the subplot by which we're supposed to measure his moral failure (he's indirectly responsible for the crippling of an innocently trusting epileptic who befriends him, and whom he subsequently cheats out of some money) is of a quite irredeemable banality. One has only to compare the Canadian sections of Saul Bellow's *Herzog*, with their memorable evocation of the immigrant experience and genuinely tragic account of the entrepreneurial failures of Herzog's father, to see how little Richler has got from like materials. And yet, though Richler's script has transferred intact many of the novel's faults to the film (where director Ted Kotcheff, occasionally mistaking loudness for liveliness, adds a few of his own), the film that's been made from it has an impact compared to which its faults recede into irrelevance.

At one point in the film (as I recall, during the course of a conspiratorial conversation between Duddy, the film's protagonist, and a hustling Jewish businessman who takes him under his wing), there's a reference to "the white man"—meaning the Gentile—a phrase I was surprised to find I recalled having heard somewhere in the dim recesses of my childhood. What makes *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* important as a film (whereas it is only commonplace as a novel) is just that, and things like it: the fact that the film gives a voice to characters and depicts a milieu not heard or seen in films before—at least, not seen depicted with such familiar intimacy and such lack of defensiveness. "Vulgar," "pushy" Jews are seen wheeling and dealing, at work and at leisure (in a funny, shrewdly knowing sequence set in a summer resort), and, above all, heard talking. Farber, the character who refers to the "white man," at one point expounds on his business ethics to Duddy—on his being at "war," and having to do dirty things so that his son won't have to (a rationalization which Duddy, with no son in sight, later adopts)—in a vein remarkably like that of Vito Corleone's in *The Godfather*; though one senses of Farber, as of Monsieur Verdoux, that, despite his rationalizations, he loves this combat, and

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of Duddy, too, that, despite the explanations we're given, he does what he does because he's good at it and because he thrives on the entrepreneurial frenzy.

Is THE film's picture of this scheming Jewish hustler who is its protagonist, however contrasted with portraits of Jews unlike him, a pernicious public airing of dirty laundry? Is it "bad for the Jews"? I can't agree with Rabbi Dan Isaac who recently claimed in the pages of the New York *Times* that it is and that it gives aid and comfort to the anti-Semite, any more than I can believe that Richard Pryor's characterizations of drunk and shiftless "niggers" play into the hands of the Ku Klux Klan; the film's materials are too much seen from the inside to be appropriated by an enemy camp. Moreover—and it's this more than anything else which gives the film its distinction—this world of Jewish moneymaking and vulgarity is seen with something approaching affection: the guests at the resort, Farber, even Duddy—they and their world are accepted by the film as its own. The film's Duddy is in fact more likable than the novel's, in part because of the personal qualities Richard Dreyfuss brings to the role (though almost any actor's presence would tend to "humanize" the character as written); but more important in this connection has been the elimination in the film of the novel's opening section, which shows Duddy, younger than when we meet him in the film and playing a part in the death of the invalid wife of one of his teachers, in a particularly unfavorable light. Yet the elimination of this opening seems to me to improve on the novel, both because the section is unsuccessful in itself and because it seems in some ways not organically connected to the Duddy of later on, rather as if Richler were trying to convince himself to like his protagonist less.

Rabbi Isaac, in support of his case, makes much of the Bar Mitzvah scene in the film. But in fact there is no Bar Mitzvah scene in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, only a pretentiously arty "documentary" film of a Bar Mitzvah made by a blacklisted director named Friar whom Duddy employs for his fledgling film-production company ("Dudley Kane Enterprises"), and this director (along with Joe Silver's Farber, the most freshly conceived, sharply etched, and best acted—by Denholm Elliott—of the film's characters) is portrayed as a pompous ass. The documentary is, in its fatuous way, anti-Semitic, though in contrast to the stinging (self-) hatred of the Bar Mitzvah scene in the film of *Goodbye Columbus*, what Richler is satirizing is plainly not the Bar Mitzvah itself but the pretensions of the director, whose anti-Semitism, such as it is, is impossible to separate from his posturing. ("I've sold my soul to the Hebrews," he mock-solemnly bemoans at one point, slapping himself on the cheek. "Shame on me. Shame, shame.") When Friar says to Duddy, "Ah, Kravitz, come to collect your pound of flesh, I suppose," a remark Rabbi Isaac adduces in support of his contention that the movie's image of Duddy gives us a contemporary Shylock, the fact is that the director has just previously cheated Duddy out of several hundred dollars, and is, by his drunkenness, jeopardizing the livelihood that Duddy has made for himself by his wits and industry.

Indeed, it isn't the Duddys and Farbers who are the target of the film's (and book's) animus, but, to an almost disturbing degree, just those other Jews who disdain or affect superiority to them. It is Friar (and, in the novel, a circle of literary intellectuals) who exploits Duddy, and not the reverse. Duddy's wealthy, socialism-espousing Uncle Benjy, whose favoring of Duddy's older brother is supposedly a key factor in shaping Duddy's development, is depicted as an impotent alcoholic who ends up regretting his rejection of Duddy and seeing his virtues. And the intelligent brother, Lennie, whom the uncle supports through medical school (Duddy's father, a widower, ekes out a living as a taxi driver and occasional pimp) is shown to be (like most of the other college students who work as waiters, with Duddy, at the summer resort) a snob and a weakling, who has to be bailed out by Duddy, with his fierce family loyalties, when Lennie's assimilationist social climbing leads him to being used by some Gentiles and lands him in a jam. It's the Duddys and Farbers who make the world go round, and buy their dependents the luxury of their high-mindedness, Richler seems to be saying, and, though he may not be saying this with complete consciousness, he has allowed Duddy a ringing defense when he asks the now dying Benjy why the old man never had time for him, and his uncle replies, "Because you're a *pusherke*. A little Jew-boy on the make. Guys like you make me sick and ashamed." "You lousy, intelligent people!" Duddy explodes. "You lying sons of bitches with your books and your socialism and your sneers. . . . Writing and reading books that make fun of people like me. . . . It's easy for you to sit here and ridicule and make superior little jokes because you know more than me, but what about a helping hand? When did you ever put yourself out one inch for me? . . . You think I should be running after something else besides money? Good. Tell me what. Tell me, you bastard."

Andrew Sarris has aptly remarked on the improbable self-consciousness of that "people like me," in which one hears not Duddy's voice but Richler's. I don't mean to suggest that *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* is in any simple sense an apologetic for Duddy, whose conniving earns him, by the end, the disapprobation of his beloved grandfather (a stock figure of old-country folk-wisdom who seems to have strayed in from a production of *Fiddler on the Roof*), and who, having driven his best friends from him, is seen at last, for all his furious activity, as only a big fish in a little pond. But it isn't an apology either. Duddy is portrayed, warts and all, and flung into the teeth of those who would scorn him. And though this spectacle is quintessentially by, about, and for Jews, the sensibility which informs it is at once sufficiently strong in its ethnic ties and secure in its relations to the world at large to relieve one of the least anxiety about having it seen by (and, for that matter, flung into the teeth of) the white man.

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Yossarian Lives

SOMETHING HAPPENED. By JOSEPH HELLER. *Knopf. 569 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by EDWARD GROSSMAN

THE famous hero of Joseph Heller's spectacularly successful first novel (*Catch-22* has sold eight million copies in the thirteen years it took Heller to write this second novel) is residing today in the suburbs of Connecticut. Bombardier Yossarian got away alive, having survived the efforts of his commanding officers to have him killed in combat. Perhaps World War II ended in time, perhaps he deserted to Sweden and sneaked home. Heller doesn't say, neither does Yossarian. Anyway, the years have changed him. He still doesn't want to die, violently or otherwise. But besides his getting older and slower, marrying and fathering, going to work for a corporation, commuting, and committing lukewarm adultery, something not-so-expected has happened in peacetime: Yossarian feels like he is living in hell, and he will be damned if he doesn't remember the air corps nostalgically.

For some reason, Heller has Yossarian living under an assumed name (is the Justice Department still looking for World War II deserters?). "Bob Slocum" has a WASPish sound to it, and that is not unintentional. Continually, Slocum describes himself as a WASP, complete with foreskin and garters, although, characteristically, he takes no pride or strength from this identity and goes to church (Unitarian) only to sneer. This seems odd —not because Yossarian was really Armenian by extraction (the cast in *Catch-22* were Punch-and-Judy puppets with ranks and last names, without origins, and Yossarian was Everyman)—but on account of the fact that Slocum in his long-winded first-person complaint, not to mention his style of thinking and expression, sounds rather Jewish:

> I've got bad feet. I've got a jawbone that's deteriorating and someday soon I'm going to have to have all my teeth pulled. It will hurt. I've got an unhappy wife to support and two unhappy children to take care of. (I've got that other child with irremediable brain damage who is neither happy nor unhappy, and I don't know what will happen to him after we're dead.) I've got eight unhappy people working for me who have problems and unhappy dependents of their own. I've got anxiety. I suppress hysteria. I've got politics on my mind, summer race riots, drugs, violence, and teen-age sex. There are perverts and deviates everywhere who might corrupt or strangle any one of my children. I've got crime in my streets. I've got old age to face. My boy, though only nine, is already worried because he does not know what he wants to be when he grows up. My daughter tells lies. . . .

On and on in this vein of self-absorption (*Something Happened* is nothing if not repetitive, as compulsively repetitive as a patient on a couch). The telltale facts and details accumulate. Slocum plays golf with his boss, hating the dumb game. Slocum's normal son is timorous and thoughtful and will grow up to be Woody Allen unless he's careful. Slocum hates his wife, yet fantasizes he is with her when he is with some girl in the city. Slocum is falsely modest when he declares, "I know so many people I want to be mean to, but I just don't have the character." The Slocums moved from Manhattan because, among other things, Puerto Ricans swiped the son's bicycle. The Slocum daughter is very intelligent, neglects her schoolwork, threatens to go off with Black Panthers. At the dinner table she and her father have dialogues, verbally hyper-alert, spiritually punishing, that go around in circles, never getting anywhere. Slocum's surly maid/cook hails from Jamaica, because Slocum is too guilty and afraid to hire an American black.

It might have been comic to put a Jew in a Gentile's skin; Heller hardly broaches such a theme, let alone works it out. However, the pretense that Slocum is a WASP does not come across as a very important evasion on Heller's part. The evasion seems gratuitous, and the reader's inclination, after first being puzzled, is to let it pass. It is not a big enough lie to account for the fact that *Something Happened* is a lump compared with *Catch-22*.

Both novels resemble great stone-like objects, slabs of uniform consistency that may be cut up without disturbing the essence. One reason for this is that both come out of a terrible, indeed a heroic, simplifying urge, a monomania that can only elaborate more variations, illustrations of itself. Both in *Catch-22* and *Something Happened*, the terms of the hero's plight are circular, solipsistic, and the novelist is prepared to demonstrate the logic of it until Doomsday (which will never dawn). Both Yossarian and Slocum are stuck in an eternal present time that never changes or holds out prospects of ending, except in death: everything except death repeats itself; the fear of death especially repeats itself. Yet *Catch-22* was buoyant, *Something Happened* sinks. *Catch-22*, a perfectly serious comic novel with a point to drive home, was loaded with belly laughs; *Something Happened*, also serious and with a lesson to teach that is not all that different, provides at most five natural laughs in more than five hundred pages. It is an unrelievedly dreary book—perhaps only a comedian when he isn't cracking jokes could be as dreary. Slocum is given to making mirthless puns and comments on his own complaints, following these up immediately with an indicative, crippling, parenthetical "(ha-ha)." It would be wrong to say that in transforming himself

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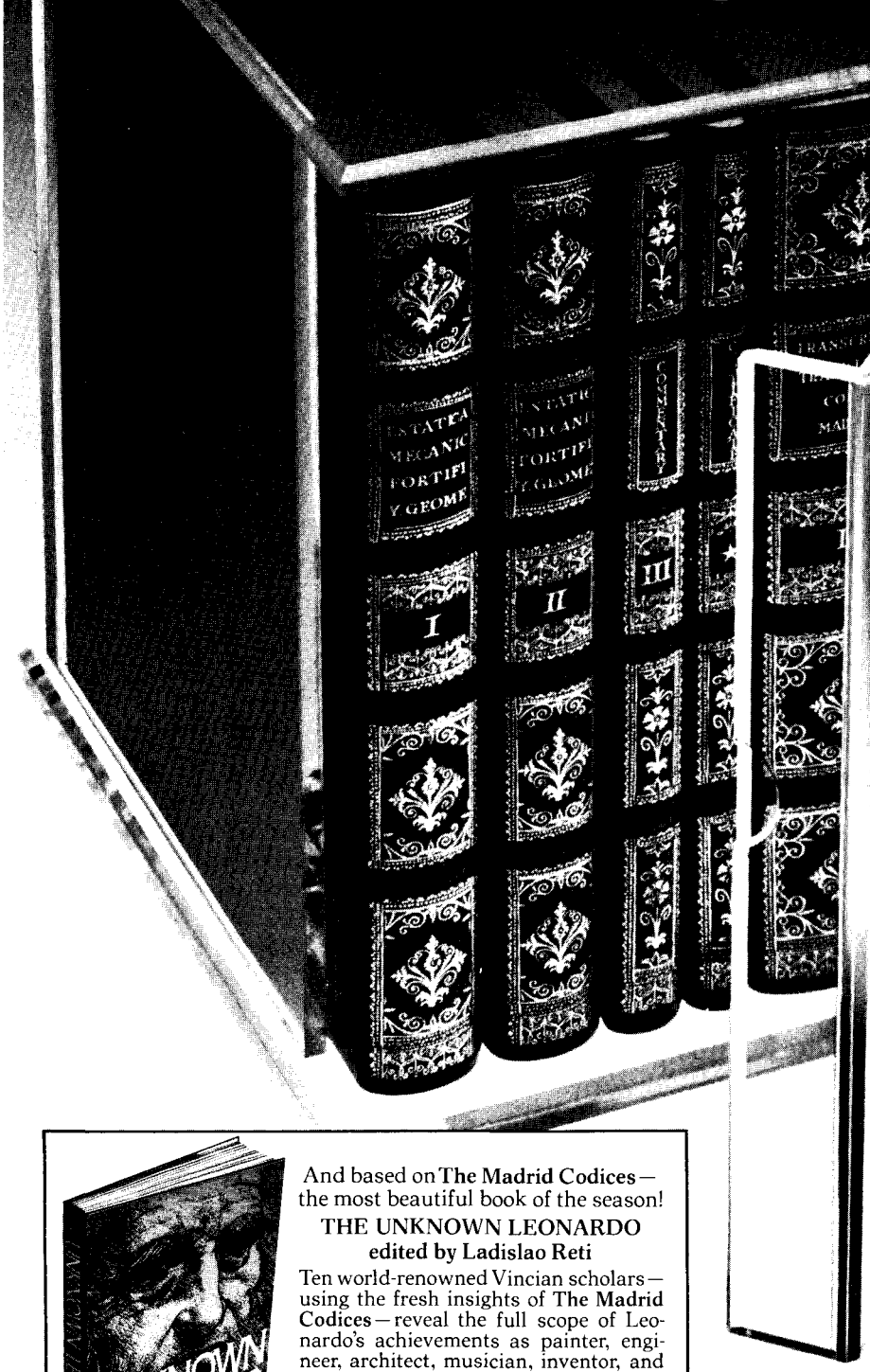

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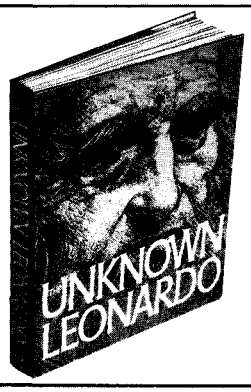
*Dr. Edward C. Moore, in **The New York Times** (2/14/67), pg. 1



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into Slocum, in the process of losing teeth and hair and gaining weight, Yossarian has lost his sense of humor: after all, Yossarian was scared stiff and dead serious all the time, and never spoke directly to the reader (he was Heller's creature); Slocum buttonholes the reader and doesn't let go (there may be questions where the dividing line is between him and the novelist). Better say that the sense of humor that vitalized *Catch-22* has been reduced, pinched down, into a small solitary nerve of dreary irony.

Slocum doesn't even believe that his youthful days before "something happened" were really bright and promising, come to think of it. As Yossarian kept flashing back to that primal, piteous scene in the B-25 where his mortally wounded comrade, Snowden, whimpered in his arms, so Slocum keeps thinking back, with impacted self-pity and regret, to the sweetly hot, teasing, slightly older girl in the insurance office where he worked after graduating from high school, whom he could never bring himself to "go all the way" with. (Her name: Virginia Markowitz. The reader is also made to know that Jack Green, Slocum's much-hated present-day boss in the corporation, is Jewish.) Returning from military service resplendent in a man's uniform and "Mediterranean tan," eager to finish the job finally, Slocum learned that Virginia had committed suicide.

He is almost as regretful about his youth as a woman in menopause. This might have been funny, touching, or terrifying; if it isn't, part of the problem may be timing. Slocum is a late entry in that line of middle-aged Jews like Saul Bellow's Herzog and Bruce Jay Friedman's Stern who made their mock-triumphant appearance a decade ago, but Slocum's predicament doesn't stir compassion (as half-wise Herzog's did) or pick at a nerve of what the publishers' PR men used to call "Black Humor." The essential dreariness of *Something Happened* can best be compared to the feel of another novel of the early 60's, Philip Roth's *Letting Go,* that catalogue of contemporary misery every entry of which the writer rubbed his reader's face into. If anything, *Something Happened* is more thoroughly dismal than *Letting Go,* for Heller is hopeless where Roth is mean, with the result that *Something Happened* may have arrived as the late epitome of a type of bygone work. It was so long gestating that it is impossible, for example, to know how old Slocum is supposed to be. If he was in the war, he must be around fifty-four, but other evidence suggests he is forty-one. Somewhere, half a generation is missing, or was telescoped. Heller obviously thinks his novels out. He could not have been unaware of this disjunction. To put an Eisenhower-era "Organization Man," tense and frustrated with the troubles sociologists like William A. Whyte described back in those fat days (the new commandments to commune and cooperate riddling the old ethic of struggle and save), into the liberated vibrating 70's is a gamble, more grueling than most novelists are willing to take now or readers are ready to pay attention to unless they are entertained. It is hard to imagine this novel enjoying the popular success *Catch-22* did. The odds-on chances are that Slocum's name will never be scrawled fondly in the latrines at Prudential Life and Time, Inc. as Yossarian's has been from Berkeley to Fort Dix. For one thing, he is too gloomy. "It's so much sweeter when you're young, so much hotter," he complains, "so much more fun."

Brooding on that missed opportunity to achieve harmless happiness, Slocum tells himself that it was better for Virginia Markowitz to die young, for now she would be facing menopause and no doubt would be "a pest." Pleasure or good or relief is never considered in *Something Happened* but that Slocum's irony undercuts it, and this has the effect, not of adding complexity, but of emphasizing simplicity: the terribly simple, hellish notion that everything is excrement. This may seem an extreme departure from the bundle of life-affirming verities that Heller crammed hilariously into his readers' head in the first novel: i.e., that in an insane world (ours) the only way out a sane man has is to try to save his skin, harm no one, fornicate like the devil. Yossarian got joy from the Italian whores. But these luscious hunks often teased, disappointed, and betrayed him, too, leaving him high and dry. There was a strain of sadism hinting at an ultimate disbelief in all possibility of good or grace in *Catch-22:* at the end, it was revealed that everyone, beautiful girls included, "worked for Milo" (Milo Minderbinder, war profiteer). If Yossarian was about to make a drastic choice for life, fleeing to peaceful Sweden to sire a brood of little Yossarians, one could wish him luck, suspecting, with his creator's implicit encouragement, that elsewhere his troubles would just change shape.

THE seed planted in *Catch-22* has come to bloom in *Something Happened.* Although it is doubtful that eight million readers really took this to heart, Heller's easily-interpreted real message in 1961, not unconnected to his experiences in World War II, was that everything eventually stinks, albeit with hysterical and sensual consolations. His clear message now, possibly drawing on his memories of slaving in a Manhattan office in the 50's, is that life is absolutely rotten and apparent consolations are tricks. As it turns out, not the war or the army was at fault, but modern life is the villain—in short, life—and people are its agents. The corporation takes the place of the somewhat allegorical bomber squadron, the executives are the ground officers, the salesmen the fliers, liable to heart attack, breakdown, and suicide instead of flak. *Catch-22* was a nightmare that it was theoretically possible to wake up from (on V-E Day?); *Something Happened* chronicles wide-awake reality through Slocum. *Here is life—smell it,* the book is saying. *Here are people—aren't they vile?* Insanity is institutionalized as if hell were mundane, and nothing extraordinary or allegorical about it. Things are what they seem, neither heightened for effect nor symbolized. Now there is no hope even, for this ordinary state of war will never end —"I hate my neighbor," Slocum says, "and he hates me." The way to retain some semblance of a grip

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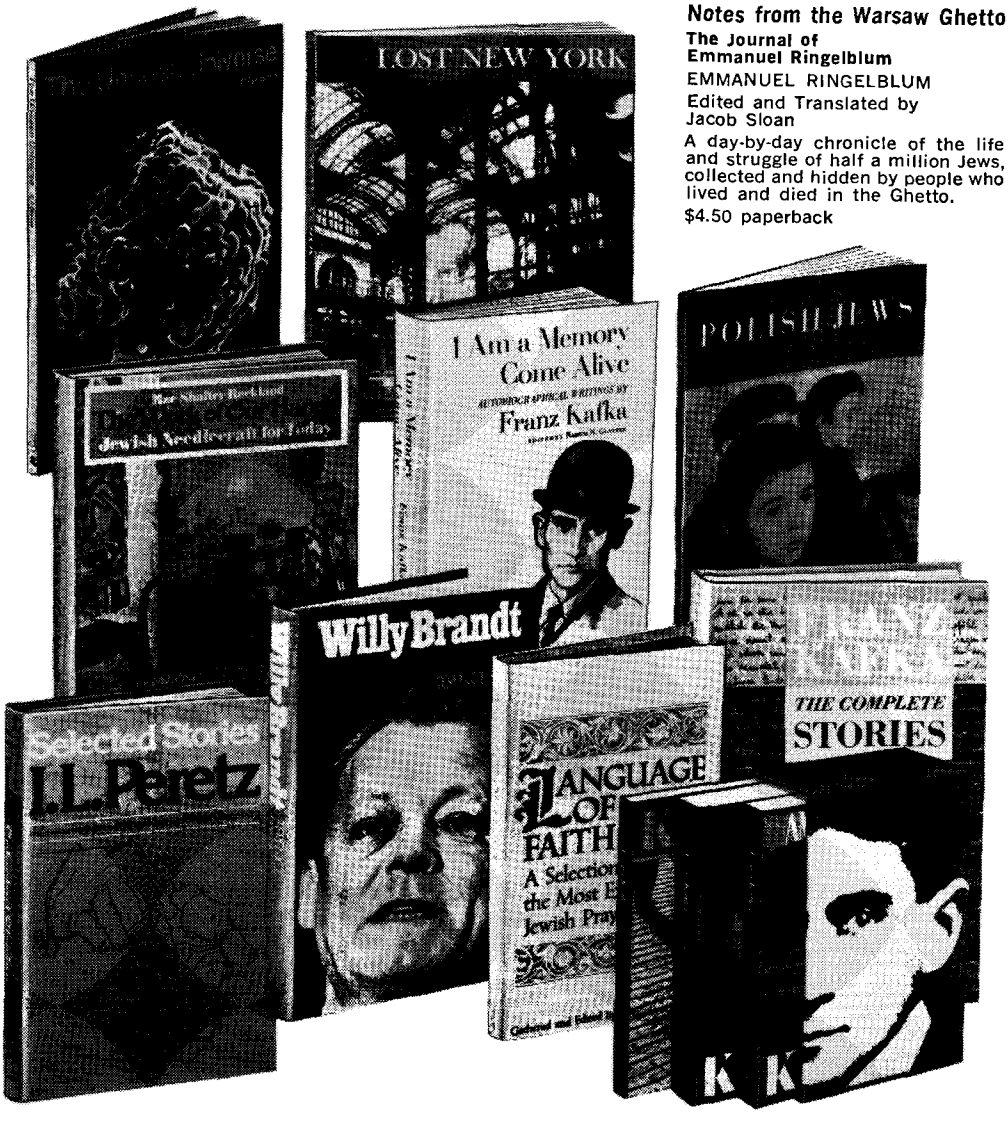

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now is to make a deal, what Yossarian refused to do but Slocum learns to enjoy, giving better than he gets in the fight to instill fear in colleagues and relations. He is really no *schlemiel,* Slocum, no loser. So far as *Something Happened* has a plot, it tells how he overcomes fear sufficiently to assume fully his executive rat-bastard role, exploiting his own paranoia to win profitable promotion instead of cracking up.

The terrible thing about this potentially is that Slocum is a fellow with compassionate, loving urges—particularly toward his normal son. Because these are not developed much, the book seldom generates the quality of everyday terror that Slocum is supposed to be feeling ("the willies"). The quality conveyed is of dreary whining grievance against life's built-in corruption factor. Dreariness, Ingmar Bergman recently told some Swedish journalists in an interview, has its place in art, and that seems right, if he meant that the subject of the work is dreariness and its texture feels simply dreary to the ignorant or impatient. For the last twenty years and for the time being (though maybe not for much longer) ordinary hell-on-earth, for the makers and consumers of Western art-matter, consists of comparative peace and prosperity and the damned passage of time (Slocum's situation in a nutshell). But something extra must make that record of dreariness luminous or dreadful (for actually madness lurks) or it will not be worth a lot—it will not be much more than complaining.

Voicing complaints, Slocum sounds more like Heller's mouthpiece, like a troubled, interesting middle-aged male creature of our times from whom Heller must maintain a certain artistic detachment but doesn't. Lately this confusion between creator and creature has become common in novels by American Jews, the failing less flagrant here than in *Portnoy's Complaint* or Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying.* Typically, life stands accused. Slocum says terrible things about it (in D. H. Lawrence's formulation, he does dirt on it), but for all his unusual command of the language (Heller knows words, and Slocum uses them precisely), these accusations come out dreary not shocking, only occasionally very shrewd and cruel:

> She [Slocum's daughter] will experiment with pep pills (ups), barbiturates (downs), mescaline, and LSD, if LSD remains in vogue; she will have group sex (at least once), homosexual sex (at least once, and at least once more with a male present as a spectator and participant), be friendly with fags, poets, snobs, nihilists, and megalomaniacs, dress like other girls, have abortions (at least one, or lie and say she did. Just about every young girl I meet these days has had at least one abortion, or claims she did, and feels compelled to boast about it to me), and sleep, for a while, with Negroes, even though she will probably enjoy none of it, and might really not want to do *any* of it. (She is a strong-minded girl who is far too weak to withstand a popular trend.) If it isn't one type of self-destruction and self-degradation she cultivates for a while, it is certain to be another; and she will emerge, if she is lucky, from this period of wanton profligacy and determined self-expression after two-and-one-half to four-and-two-thirds years feeling tense, worthless, spent, and remorseful, having searched everywhere and found nothing, with no ego at all, and pine for just one good, stable, interesting man to marry (like myself) and live happily ever after with. She will wish she had children. (She won't find that one man she wants, of course, because we're not that good.) I hope she stays away from addictive drugs so that she will be able to come out of it when she decides she wants to. I hope she doesn't get pregnant and have to have that abortion. I hope she doesn't insist on telling me about any of it.

This is like a white noise or hum, the sound an analysand emits. Throughout, the style Heller gives Slocum is ideally suited to the purpose of low-grade complaint, unsuited to the more difficult purpose of evoking terror or accusing God. *My soul is weary of my life. . . .* Slocum isn't Job by a long shot, he isn't even marked by that

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residue of Congregationalism that Cheever's or Updike's authentic WASP suburban sufferers wear like a whimsical nimbus while they learn to be satisfied with crabgrass and good whiskey. Slocum's suffering, real enough no doubt, is an overgrown boy's, not a man's. The long ingrown parentheses on every page are the perfect scheme for handling his adolescent irony, the natural expression of the Diaspora mind-set.

Heller evades the implications that these parenthetical twists put on an ordinary, widespread, recognizable kind of complaining. It isn't necessary to be Jewish to be a middle-aged American man, baffled, bored, bitter, and jumpy, getting cancer in your corporation job. American life and literature, Gentile and Jewish, are populated with boy-men who were young draftees in World War II, couldn't *wait* to get back to the States, and now, more and more as years go by, look back on the war as the best time of their lives, not so much because they were young then, but because it was the only half-way adventurous and morally justifiable thing they have ever participated in. They are likely to embrace hypochondria, flirt with paranoia. At some level of consciousness they will become suspicious that the world is entropic, or at least that it no longer has a decent place for them. Like Slocum, they will come to doubt the possibility of being a husband, a father, a provider, an adulterer—a man. They will feel cheated: Where did life turn from promising to drab to hellish, and whose fault is it? If "Slocum" is Jewish, it is not his predicament that shows it, nor even the fact that he is incapable of murder, divorce, or abandonment of his family and flight to Tahiti with a hippie chick. The tip-off is his language, those ironical, hairsplitting asides that find a dark lining to every cloud. It could not have been easy to incorporate them without breaking the monotonous droning flow, but Heller did it. This is his technical achievement.

It more than makes up for that little ethnic evasion. The really important evasion in this book is from the implications of the "idiot child," Derek (the sort of name

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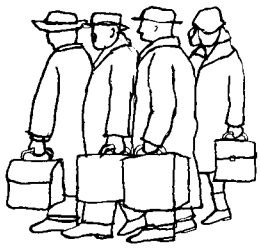
Jews give their sons today). ". . . We do not love him," says Slocum, "at all (we would prefer not to think about him . . .)." If Slocum is what Yossarian survived to be, does that imply that the wages of pacifism and fornication are hell on earth? Can a pacifistic fornicator cope with having a brain-damaged son when God or chance deals him one? Highly charged moralistic questions, obviously suggested, but hardly engaged, in *Something Happened,* perhaps due to a failure of nerve or intelligence, perhaps because a full consideration would have made things just too complicated (for a novelist of genius, whom it is not unfair to wish for, Derek would have been heaven-sent). Above all, *Something Happened* was meant to be simple, and it is, so Heller ought to be credited with another achievement, which is roughly artistic. By having Slocum sell out 100 per cent, Heller was faithful right to the end to the main idea of *Something Happened,* and thanks to this the book is finally more coherent and even more of a simple piece than *Catch-22* was. It is a novel fashioned in cold blood —a cold stone of a book, braver than most, braver than *Catch-22,* not brave enough. Captain Yossarian only made up his mind to desert when the Allies had obviously won the war and were mopping up the Hitlerites—he made sure to explain this, rather defensively, to his comrades-in-arms who were staying. Heller had no choice but to put these words in his mouth, or risk writing a truly monstrous book. Yossarian's farewell speech did not ring true; it was a "cop-out," the half-hearted gesture of the author in the direction of liberal pieties that he was either afraid or not yet willing to renounce completely, the way, for example, Céline did. By comparison, although there may well be something jejune, even sinful, in the simplicity of Heller's vision in this second book, there is little doubt that his success in cleaving to it for all these years and pages gives *Something Happened* a sort of heroic, massive integrity so dense the book sinks under its weight.



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THE CAPTIVE DREAMER. By CHRISTIAN DE LA MAZIÈRE. Translated by FRANCIS STUART. *Saturday Review Press/Dutton. 288 pp. $7.95.*

Reviewed by PETER SHAW

CHRISTIAN DE LA MAZIÈRE is the self-possessed young man in Marcel Ophuls's movie *The Sorrow and the Pity* who admits to having been a fascist during the war. As a result of his appearance in the movie de la Mazière decided to write *The Captive Dreamer,* a compelling memoir of his life from 1944 to 1947. He expresses some regrets and offers a few self-justifications, but he has written neither a self-recriminating apology nor a self-justifying *apologia* but rather what the French would call an *apologue*—a moral fable. That he himself finds little to moralize about in his past does not diminish the impact of his book. For instead of inspiring outrage his dispassion raises the question of how to deal with the diminishing moral authority of the Holocaust.

In 1944 de la Mazière, the twenty-four-year-old son of a prominent general and diplomat, worked for *Le Pays Libre,* a fascist newspaper in Paris. As he begins to explain in *The Sorrow and the Pity,* he had progressed from his inherited romantic-aristocratic nationalism to the vision of a glorious future presented by Nazi propaganda. Through heroic self-sacrifice he hoped to become part of a revolution against big business and other selfish elements in society (he does not say if he believed the propaganda when it went on to identify the Jews as the culprits). With the victory of the allied armies unquestionable and imminent, an old friend offered de la Mazière the chance to switch sides and join a resistance group; instead of accepting, he volunteered for the French division of the Waffen SS.

He was sent to Wildflecken, Germany, to join the French Charle-

PETER SHAW *teaches English at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.*

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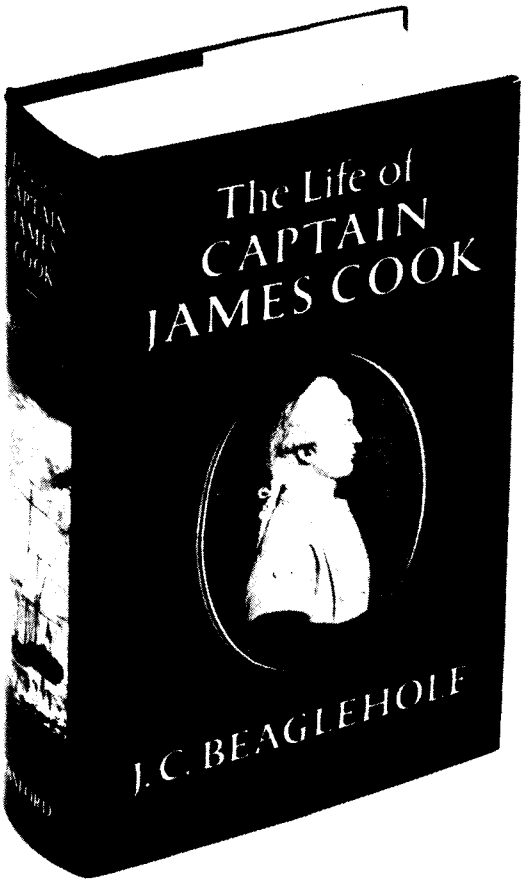
magne division, one among several groups of foreign volunteers training to fight on the collapsing eastern front. Proud of his spartan training and the egalitarian spirit in which officers were supposed to eat the same food and run the same risks as their men, de la Mazière was sent to the front as an anti-tank officer. He describes incidents during his training in which the French outsmarted their German officers when they tried to impose absurdly strict regulations (at one point the French, to avoid an order to shoot one of their number who has committed a small infraction, set up a dummy in front of a firing squad). Yet all these years later, he expresses no second thoughts about the nature of the SS. On the other hand, he tells how, aware of the impending catastrophe, his instinct for survival led him cleverly to avoid being tattooed under the arm with the SS insignia—a precaution that saved his life when he was captured and which subsequently mitigated the prison sentence that he served in France.

De la Mazière's unit was put in a hopeless position before the advancing Russians at Korlin, a northern German town near the Baltic sea in Pomerania. After three days of fighting, about three hundred men slipped out of the town at night. For three weeks they wandered in the wintry forests, their numbers decimated by skirmishes with the Russians, until de la Mazière and four remaining companions (the original force had broken up into groups of ten) surrendered to a patrol of Polish troops fighting with the Russians.

The tale of de la Mazière's survival, including brushes with death after being turned over to the Russians and then the French, from both of whom he concealed his fighting role with the Waffen SS, is as astonishing as those of the few European Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Yet, unlike these innocent survivors, who have continued to suffer guilt over those they left behind, de la Mazière, perhaps because he believes he suffered his punishment by going to jail, lives free of conscience pangs.

"An immensely rich book."—*The New Yorker*



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His only regrets come in the form of resentments: He was deceived by the Nazi myths; he was tried by civil authorities where a military tribunal would have been more lenient; he was verbally abused by French railway workers on his way to prison even though these same workers ran the trains for the Germans during the war; Russian killing in Siberia is never mentioned though reference is made constantly to Nazi atrocities.

But de la Mazière is not arguing his innocence. Instead he in effect balances against his guilt the genuineness of his motives, his heroism, and his personal integrity. To begin with, he insists that he has never been an anti-Semite. Not until after the war did he learn of the death camps: "I knew that camps existed—what country has not had its camps?—but not of the extermination plan that they served." During his trial in France a Jewish tailor testified that de la Mazière arranged for him to hide in unoccupied France. With aristocratic disdain for currying favor, though, de la Mazière reveals that he did this only as a favor for a friend, that he found the tailor obnoxious, and that while in hiding the tailor made ill-fitting clothes for the de la Mazières, who were hiding him, and their friends. He is no anti-Semite, de la Mazière is saying, but he will not pretend to be a philo-Semite. As for the Waffen SS, that was strictly a fighting unit which had nothing to do with the mass murder of civilians committed by the other divisions of the SS. In fact, the Waffen SS was known for its brutalities by 1944. It had been involved in the last days of the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto. Early in 1944 one of its units put to death men, women, and children in a town in southern France; in June another unit in Normandy put to death American prisoners captured after the D-Day invasion. Thus de la Mazière, well-informed as he was, volunteered for a possibly legal but notoriously brutal military force. His claim of Waffen SS innocence is of a piece with his deceptive treatment of the crucial facts of his past. At his trial, he writes, "it was only by a certain frankness that I could keep my self-respect." But from his capture through his trial and prison term he lied that he was with the Waffen SS strictly as a journalist.

The truth of *The Captive Dreamer* is a truth to experience, and it contains some unsettling truths for those who might have been de la Mazière's victims. Its author was both intelligent and idealistic and yet a fascist. In the process of recreating his experience he has written a small, hard classic, its prose reflecting the duplicitous brilliance of its author. "Prisons, like churches, always escape the bombings," he writes, at first charming the reader with an economy of Gallic wit. Only later does the reader recall the destruction of Canterbury Cathedral and the monuments to bombed-out churches in central London.

Preoccupied with his experience and his own accomplishment as a writer, de la Mazière is not especially concerned about the horrors with which he associated himself. Until recently such detachment, at least in public, would have been inconceivable for anyone so involved as de la Mazière was. But as is apparent from the loose way that the word genocide has come to be used, the Holocaust has ceased to compel the conscience of mankind. It is a sobering thought. On the other hand, the moral seriousness of de la Mazière's book, flawed as it is, suggests that perhaps this is as it should be. As long as men's imaginations remained overwhelmed by the Holocaust they could not write as he has. And as long as they could not so write, which is to say come to some kind

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of terms with their own experience, they must have felt resentment toward those who evoked their guilt. (If this is true it may be that the distressing rise of anti-Israel criticism is an expression, in some quarters at least, of a pent-up urge to throw off a constraint. It is even possible that it will have good effects as well as bad.) Whatever the results of efforts such as de la Mazière's, it appears that the moral burden of the Holocaust is destined to be left to the Jews. In a sense that part of it has become nobody's business but their own.

The Casualties of Exile

PICTURES FROM A BREWERY. By ASHER BARASH. Translated by KATIE KAPLAN. *Bobbs-Merrill. 270 pp. $6.95.*

THE AGUNAH. By CHAIM GRADE. Translated by CURT LEVIANT. *Bobbs-Merrill. 265 pp. $6.95.*

Reviewed by DAVID STERN

THE Eastern European Jewish town, or *shtetl*, which survives today only as a vestige of the imagination, was the locale in which Yiddish literature first arose and from which it drew its first stock of characters and themes. Indeed, Yiddish literature never truly escaped the site of its origin. In a remarkably brief period of time, it compressed a complete cycle of development, and passed from an early, ardent celebration of *shtetl* life to a harsh condemnation of its provinciality and its social and economic inequities; by the time of the latter phase, however, the *shtetl*, succumbing to the encroachments of modernity, was already on the path to its own dissolution, and the greatest Yiddish novelists, like Mendele Mocher Seforim, were turning back to the memories of their youth and romanticizing what they had once excoriated. Ultimately, the historical fate of the *shtetl* was sealed amid the destruction of Eastern European Jewry in World War II, but the image of this prototypical Jewish community of the modern Diaspora has nevertheless continued to exert a persistent hold upon Yiddish writers in the post-Holocaust era.

Yet even when Yiddish literature was at its height, the *shtetl* was hardly its exclusive property, as Asher Barash's *Pictures from a Brewery,* an early classic of modern Hebrew literature (published now in English for the first time) testifies. Barash, who has been called the father of modern Hebrew social realism because of his richly particularized renditions of Jewish life, was born in Galicia and emigrated to Palestine in 1913. Though he has been frequently compared with Agnon, who also wrote extensively about the Jews of Galicia, and whose biography bears striking resemblances to his own, Barash is far less allusive and less recondite than his better known peer. His gift was primarily that of a storyteller, and *Pictures from a Brewery* itself resembles a group of loosely-connected stories more than a tightly-constructed novel. In contrast to the emphasis placed by many Yiddish writers on the bleak, paralyzing aspects of *shtetl* life, Barash's fictional town of L. is an uncommonly tranquil, almost idyllic community, as yet undisturbed by either internal strife or external enemies. Even the foreigners who occasionally visit L., and offer its inhabitants their rare glimpses of the world beyond its walls, are seen more as objects of dumbfounded amazement than as emissaries of the powers which would inevitably destroy the gentleness of that life.

The center of the Jewish community in L., and the subject of this narrative, is the Aberdam family, a *shtetl* "dynasty" whose aristocratic, matriarchal founder, Hannah Aberdam, leases an abandoned brewery from the local Polish nobleman and turns it into a thriving enterprise which at one point supports the town's entire Jewish population. Beyond the initial prosperity which the brewery brings to the Aberdams, however, Barash hints of a grimmer destiny for them. Bracha, Mrs. Aberdam's only child, is a beautiful but cold and melancholic woman who is unable to bear children for the

DAVID STERN *is currently doing graduate work at Harvard.*

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first fifteen years of her marriage; when she finally gives birth, first to twin daughters and later to a son, Bracha finds that her maternal instincts have atrophied. Her children, in turn, grow up to witness the loss of the brewery and with it, the wealth and influence of the Aberdam dynasty.

The downfall of the Aberdams comes in the wake of the appearance in L. of two learned hasidic Jews, who obtain the new lease to the brewery illegally and resist all attempts to dislodge them. Mrs. Aberdam appeals her case to the all-powerful *rebbe* of Belz, but he too proves powerless against the interlopers. Barash's portrayal of the end of the Aberdam dynasty does not necessarily reflect an anti-religious attitude; as his narrative makes clear, the two conniving businessmen trespass upon the family's rights not because of, but despite, their religious piety. The arrival of the brewery's new owners indeed signifies a new era in *shtetl* life, but one lacking the spirit of generosity and humanity which had once marked the community as totally as the rituals of the traditional Jewish law had once molded every aspect of its daily routine. Although Barash forgoes the scene of violence almost endemic to the denouements of *shtetl* literature, he begins and ends his account of the Aberdams with an eerily evocative image: the dream of a burning bed which consumes its occupant as he sleeps.

Yet what remains most unusual about this novel is the fact, again, that it was written in Hebrew, rather than in Yiddish. Barash began work on *Pictures from a Brewery* in 1914, a year after his arrival in Palestine, during a period when Jewish nationalists were engaged in a bitter debate over which of the two languages was to serve as the single "true" tongue of the Jewish people—Yiddish, the language of the "folk" and of socialist ideology, or Hebrew, the official language of Zionist aspirations. A parallel struggle was taking place in the literary arena: if Yiddish fiction, directed at a *shtetl* audience, was animated by the urge to enlighten and educate its readers, the mere gesture of writing in Hebrew was a kind of symbolic repudiation of all that the *shtetl* represented in Jewish history. That Barash in spite of this chose Hebrew as the language in which to convey his sympathetic, almost loving portrait of *shtetl* life suggests the ambivalence of emotion which the idea of Diaspora was already beginning to arouse in Jewish writers, an ambivalence that no writer in Hebrew has yet come any closer than Barash to resolving. For these qualities, both intrinsic and extrinsic to the narrative, *Pictures from a Brewery* makes a welcome addition to the body of modern Hebrew works now available to the English-reading public; Katie Kaplan's translation also makes it a lucid and elegant one.

CHAIM GRADE, a generation younger than Barash, was born in Vilna and studied at several of the great *yeshivot* of Eastern Europe until, at the age of twenty-two, he broke with his traditional upbringing and began to write poetry; he did not start to write fiction, however, until after he had emigrated to America following World War II. Grade's first published story, "My Quarrel with Hersh Rasseyner," met with immediate acclaim and has since become a small classic of modern Yiddish literature. (Translated by Milton Himmelfarb, it appeared in English in COMMENTARY, November 1953, and is included in Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg's *Treasury of Yiddish Stories*.) Cast in the form of a dialogue between Chaim Vilner, a thinly disguised representation of Grade himself, and Hersh Rasseyner, a former yeshiva classmate who has since become the head of his own seminary, the story was written in direct response to the Holocaust, and questioned the possibility of faith in its aftermath. Although many of the arguments which the two men rehearse are by now familiar, the story remains a searingly powerful experience because, in Grade's skillful dramatization, their encounter is a head-on collision between the opposed value-systems of the religious and secular Jew, as well as between the two con-

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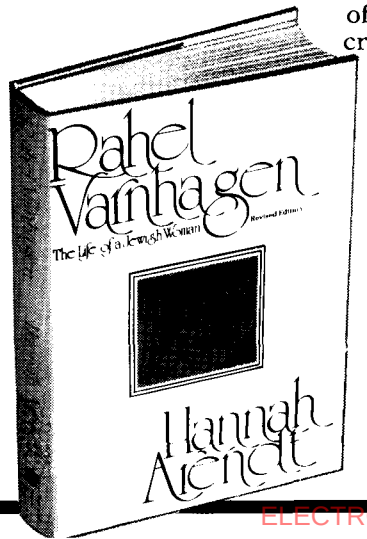

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flicting impulses within the author himself toward the problem of traditional Jewish belief. Indeed, throughout the story, one senses that its seemingly abstract discussions of theodicy are an intimate echo of the debate Grade held with himself before abandoning his Orthodox past, while the feverish tension of the confrontation—and its ultimate failure to reconcile either faith or the lack of it with the catastrophic fact of the Holocaust—is a clear indication of the pain Grade must have suffered in leaving the world of the yeshiva.

THE contours of this personal odyssey, so strongly marked by ambivalence, are equally present in *The Agunah*, one of several novels in which Grade has attempted to recreate the inner life of his birthplace and particularly its religious dimension, as it was experienced most intensely within the walls of the *yeshivot* and among the more devout segments of the community. Because this world was traditionally cloistered, and hence rarely touched upon in literature with any semblance of accuracy, these novels are as valuable for the historical source material they contain as for their genuinely high degree of artistry. It is only to be regretted that Curt Leviant's translation is inadequate to the novel's epic character and fails to capture its style.

The Agunah takes its title from a Hebrew term—literally, a "deserted one"—describing a woman whose husband has disappeared under unknown or mysterious circumstances; according to Orthodox Jewish law, the woman is not permitted either to divorce or to remarry until two witnesses can be found to testify to the husband's certain death. The *agunah* of Grade's novel is Merl Tswilling, whose husband went off to fight in the Czar's army some fifteen years earlier and has never returned. Defying rabbinic ruling, Merl decides to marry again and thereby precipitates a bitter conflict between the elder rabbis of Vilna and one younger rabbi, David Zelver, who alone permits the remarriage on grounds of circumstantial evidence. The rabbinic conflict in the book centers then

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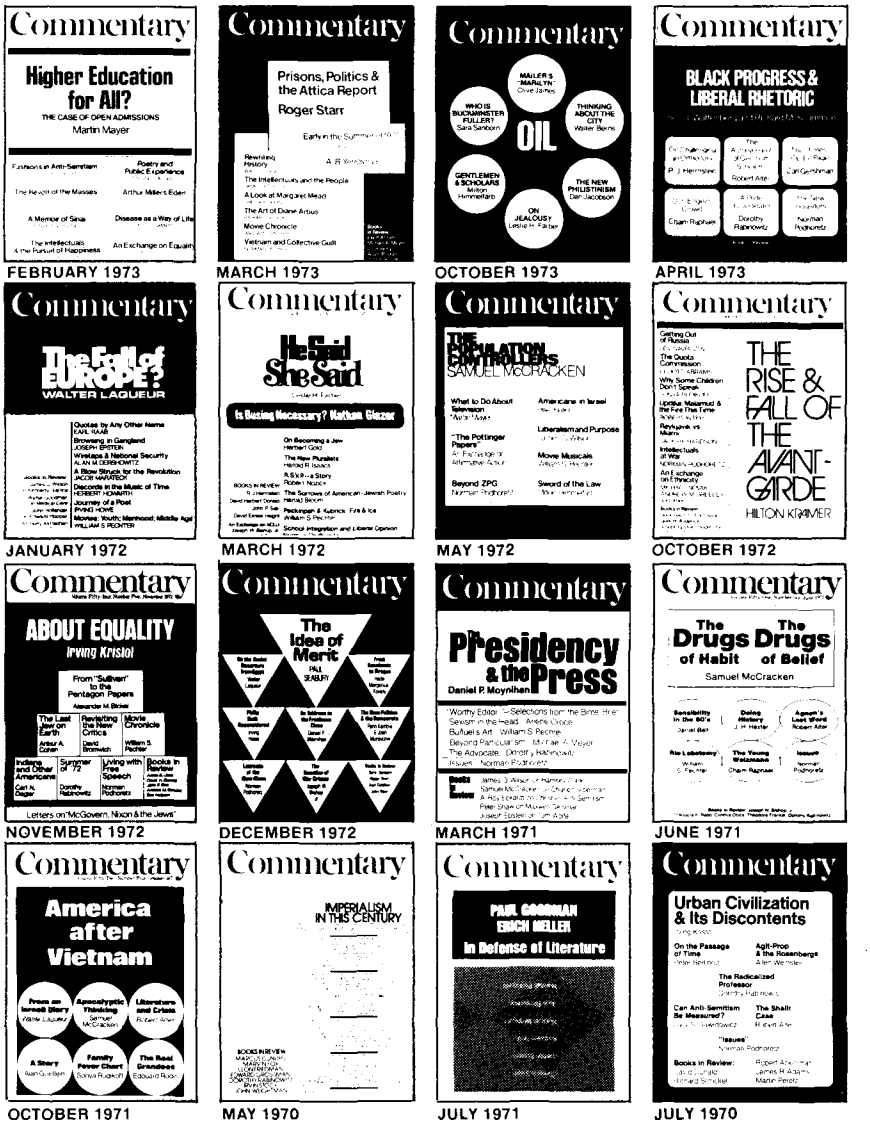

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on the question of whether the demands of human compassion can be made compatible with strict adherence to the law; yet it is the "compassionate" ruling of the younger rabbi that, in the end, eventuates in unmitigated tragedy, in an epidemic of murders culminating in the suicide of the *agunah*.

The true protagonist of this novel, however, is neither Merl, nor the rabbis of Vilna, but the *halacha*, Jewish religious law, which, in all its murky complexity, hovers above the town and inexorably draws each character to his fate. Grade's attitude toward the *halacha* is too complex to be summarized as a mere indictment of its severity, even if, as in the dilemma of the *agunah*, he makes the law's specifications appear needlessly cruel. Like Kafka, he is more concerned with, even obsessed by, the impossibility of eluding the judgments of the law and the helplessness of his fictional characters to free themselves from their devout adherence to it. The *halacha*, as Grade conceives it, is not only the framework of Judaism but its sole content, wholly beyond human understanding, unremitting, and sometimes pitiless, in its claims to absolute authority: even the novel's "good" rabbi, David Zelver, admits that he permitted the *agunah* to remarry not so much out of compassion for her plight as out of his belief that the law actually permits it. Like Grade's other works, *The Agunah* ultimately fails to resolve those conflicts which characterize his ambivalence toward the *halacha*, but the real achievement of the novel is its attempt to personify them in the fate which overtakes the Jewish community of Vilna. The violence which, at the narrative's end, consumes the town only begins to suggest the urgency, if not volatility, which the demands of the law still exercise upon Grade.

DESPITE their differences in language, time, and place of composition, both *The Agunah* and *Pictures from a Brewery* share a common, specifically Jewish, experience: the casualties of exile. Barash's idyllic portrait of the *shtetl*, puzzling to a reader acquainted with the many literary portraits of the less tranquil side of Jewish life in Galicia, may have been intended, consciously or unconsciously, as an ironic response to Barash's own situation—that of a writer, living in Palestine, writing in Hebrew, who nevertheless felt himself to be in exile *from* the Diaspora. For Grade, the survivor of one Diaspora, and now, in the United States, the resident of another, the experience of exile has been less a matter of geography than of religious faith. The dilemma of the *agunah* may serve as Grade's metaphor for that peculiar limbo in which the Diaspora Jew has continually found himself: chafing at his allegiance to the values of his past, yet never wholly free to espouse other, new ones.

Radical Faith

RELIGION AND REVOLUTION. By GUENTER LEWY. *Oxford University Press. 694 pp. $17.50.*

CHRISTIANITY, JUDAISM, AND REVOLUTION. By WILFRIED DAIM. Translated by PETER TIRNER. *Frederick Ungar. 181 pp. $7.50.*

Reviewed by JAMES HITCHCOCK

THE fascination which revolution once more exercises over Western intellectuals has inevitably made itself felt in theology, for reasons both obvious and obscure. Most obvious, perhaps, is the basic moral earnestness required by religion, the need to take seriously the demands of justice, which therefore prevents revolution from being dismissed out of hand. Less obvious but equally important is the evident decline in self-confidence and theological certainty which has also affected most Western religions, leaving some intense adherents thirsting for an absolute to which to commit themselves but finding no theological correlative worthy of their gift. Related to this

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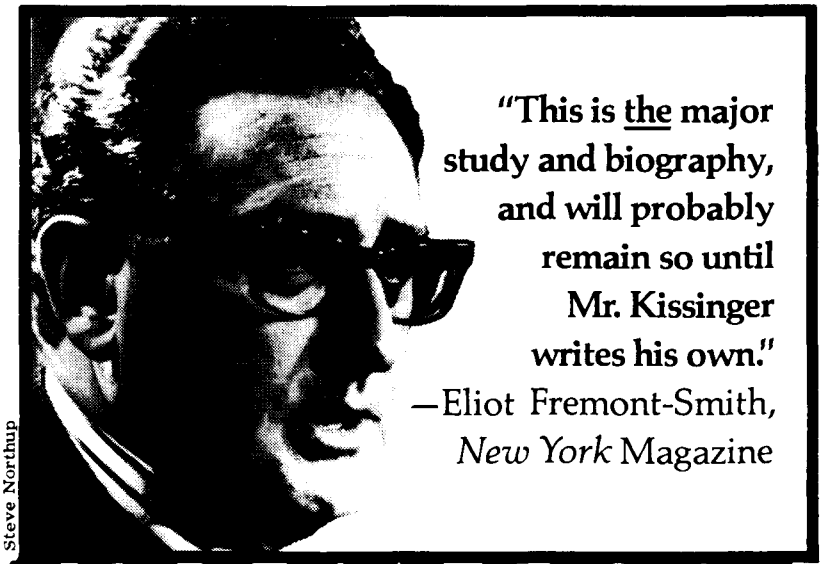
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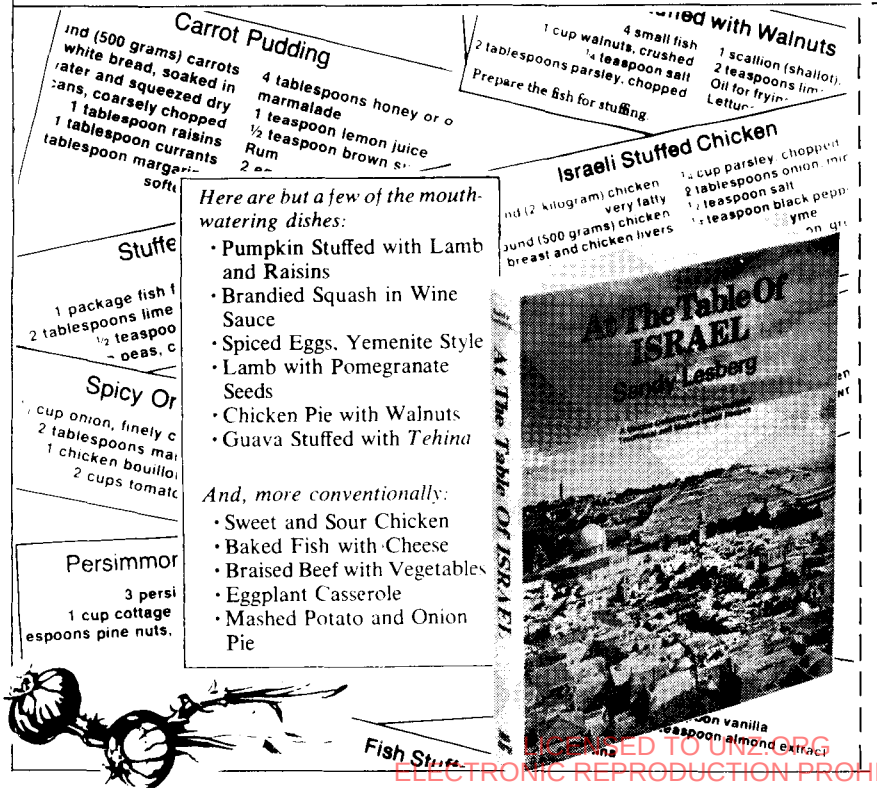
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is the obscure process by which people in a declining and weakening culture come to admire the vitality and self-assertiveness of a culture seemingly on the rise.

If religion, in modern history, has been predictably on the conservative side of most social conflicts, this predictability has declined considerably in the past decade, and Guenter Lewy, a political scientist whose previous work was *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, has undertaken a systematic and dispassionate analysis of the factors which dispose a religious group either for or against social change.

In an overheated atmosphere in which theologians sometimes brandish the word "revolution" like a scimitar, Professor Lewy's book is impressive for its scope and carefulness and for its "demythologizing" function. He is not a reactionary, and neither is he starry-eyed about what revolutions are and can accomplish. His precise delineation of the conservative and radical factors in religion help make comprehensible a process which some theologians would like to keep under a mystic cloud.

Lewy begins by noting that all the major religions of the world—Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—harbor tendencies which can work either for or against the existing social order, depending on circumstances. Sometimes the same sacred texts, the same inviolable principles, are invoked to support opposite political implications.

The purpose of the book, therefore, is to determine under what conditions religion ceases to serve its generally conservative function and becomes a radical or rebellious force. (Functionalist social science has emphasized the role of religion in integrating the social structure. Lewy is more interested in the situations in which the two conflict.) The result is a rapid but careful survey of historical manifestations of religious radicalism in a wide variety of times and cultures, including not only the major faiths but also eccentric and sectarian movements. Necessarily the author has used secondary sources, but they seem well chosen.

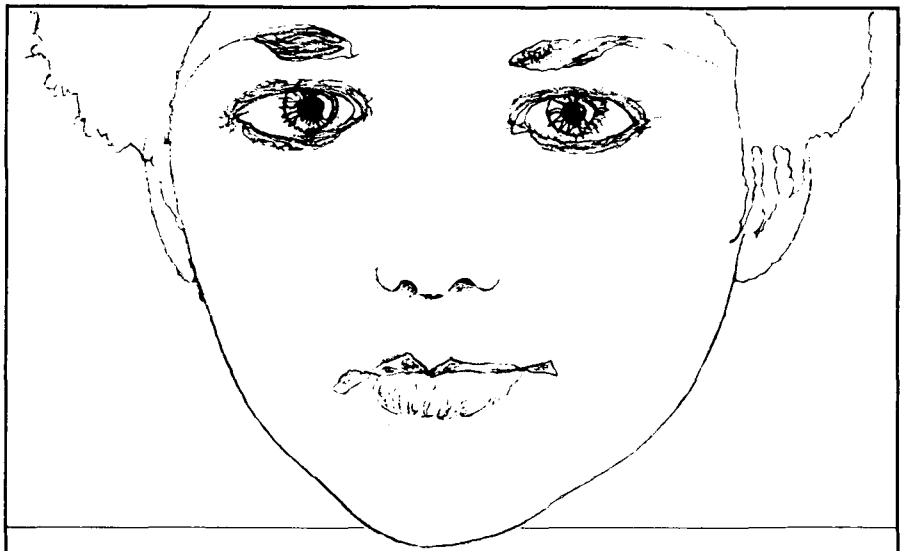
Lewy admits that religion, for all its social implications, cannot be fully explained sociologically and must be understood in terms of "certain primary psychological and moral needs of man." He thus implicitly rejects the Marxist analysis: since economics alone cannot explain religious belief, religion-as-opiate is at best a partial description of the phenomenon, nor can the periodic "radicalization" of religion be explained if religion is merely a prop of the social structure.

In doctrine, all major religions teach some version of obedience to the ruling powers. But they also preach a moral code which transcends all worldly institutions, and believe in a divine power governing the universe which is above all human powers. Thus the injunction to obey lawful rulers can become a force for resistance precisely by denying the validity of the adjective. There is perhaps ultimately no better justification for revolt than the appeal to some higher power whose existence is acknowledged by almost everyone.

A similar ambiguity attaches to the structure or organization of a religion. On the one hand, a highly institutionalized group, with clergy, hierarchies, and privileges, may well be wedded to the status quo. But where its institutional interests appear threatened by the secular state, it can easily become an agency of rebellion. Its institutional strength gives it self-confidence and a certain leverage.

A religious group may also be divided in terms of the social positions of its leaders, as for example in the split between higher and lower clergy in the French Revolution. Religions, perhaps more than any other social organisms, have a tendency to produce charismatic leaders, whose unconventionality and reliance on personal spiritual authority often bring them into conflict with established systems. Thus in some cases persons more than structures influence the social role of religion.

Lewy emphasizes the existence of other important variables as well, such as religion serving as the rallying point of native identity against foreign oppression, or a re-



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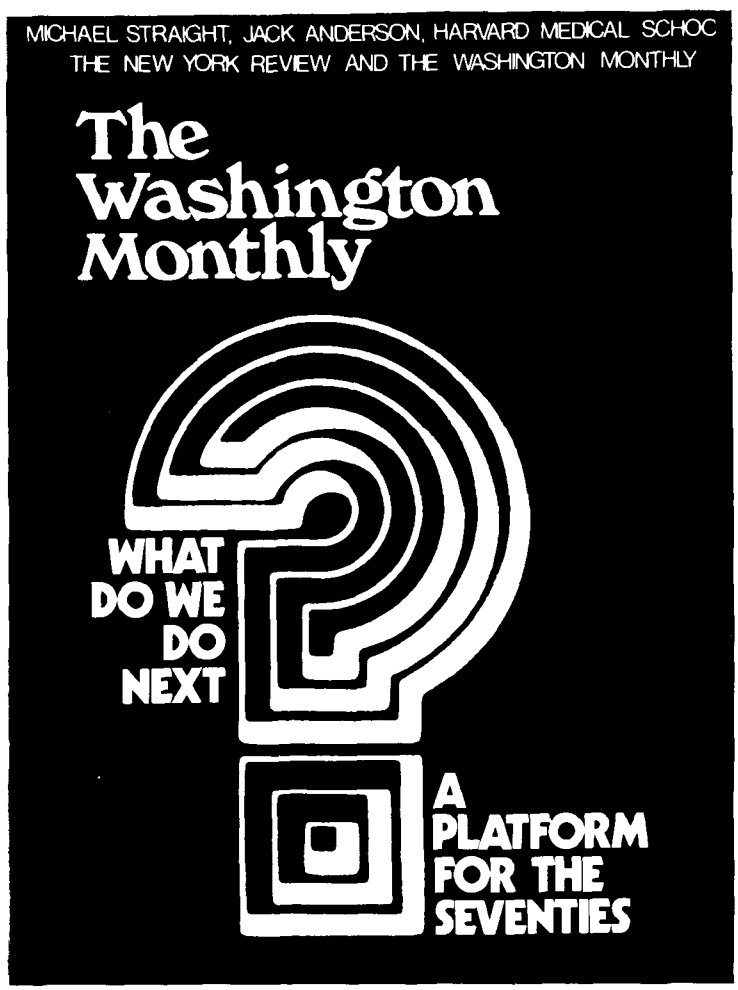
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ligious idea like Hindu nonviolence coinciding with successful political tactics. In the end he concedes that no general theory, encompassing all cases and allowing for prediction, is possible. The reader is left then with a certain vague dissatisfaction, as though the elusive thread which would explain the "Janus-like" social role of religion has still not been grasped. Why precisely is the face now turned this way, now that?

WHEN Lewy warns that today's modish theologies of revolution "slight the cruelties and hatreds that commonly accomplish revolutionary upheavals" and do not always ask the question whether revolution necessarily improves the lot of those who live under it, he might have used Wilfried Daim's book as a proof text. Daim, a Viennese Catholic psychoanalyst, has produced one of the more absurd entries in this current revolutionary sweepstakes, and since there are already so many being sired in the English language, it is difficult to understand why anyone felt the need to bring in this workhorse from Austria. Whatever justification for existence Daim's book has comes in the closing chapters, where he argues that the Catholic Church will make accommodations with Communist regimes in Eastern Europe just as it did in the past with secular liberalism and other modern movements. Others have said it before, and with far greater sophistication, but at least here Daim can claim some link with reality.

The central thesis of the book is that, from the time of Abraham, Judaism has been essentially a movement of world revolution. (The Jews were the chosen people only so they could become an elite revolutionary vanguard.) Unfortunately, later generations "spiritualized" the message, that is, got it mixed up with religion. Jesus was the culmination of the Jewish revolutionary tradition, but unhappily Christianity lost sight of that fact; only now is authentic religion being recovered, a happy process in which it is discovered that not only are Judaism and Christianity identical, but both are virtually one with Marxism.

The quality of Daim's argument can be savored in the fact that Mao Tse-tung (without of course knowing it) is found to have most penetratingly illuminated the meaning of the Exodus and Moses in his coming down from the mountain discovering "the fascist party" worshiping the golden calf.

Although there are a few perfunctory disclaimers about Stalin, Daim shows only the slightest reservations about any revolution whatsoever, including the Russian. His formula for making religion relevant essentially consists in accepting the entire Marxist ethos along with existing Communist regimes. But then what Daim most admires in Moses is his ruthlessness in crushing "counterrevolutionary" opposition.

Upgrading Engels

ENGELS, MANCHESTER, AND THE WORKING CLASS. By STEVEN MARCUS. *Random House. 271 pp. $8.95.*

Reviewed by
WERNER J. DANNHAUSER

MARX continues to exert influence even—or especially—in countries without experience of revolutions undertaken in his name. The attraction his thought commands is not easy to explain or articulate unless one assumes either that Marxism is simply true or that it is the only game in town. The former is impossible to maintain for anyone who combines intelligence with integrity; the latter is obviously the case for many honorable and gifted men. But while such men may find the thought of Marx to be the most viable universe of discourse available to them, they are likely to feel ill at ease with a thinker who considered a multi-volumed study of capitalist economics to be his *magnum opus.* A realm of thought whose center is occupied by *Das Kapital* is not one conducive to thinking or speaking meaningfully about death, love, or God—topics not

WERNER J. DANNHAUSER, *professor of government at Cornell University, is the author of the forthcoming* Nietzsche's View of Socrates *(Cornell University Press).*

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readily dismissed as mere bourgeois preoccupations. Various stratagems have been devised to circumvent this difficulty. One of them has been to find in Marx the completion and perfection of the thought first of Hegel and then of Rousseau, a process that threatens to end in a Left revival of interest in the pre-Socratics. Another tactic has consisted in orchestrating an old cliché according to which Marx was himself no Marxist, and of trying to cross-pollinate his ideas with those of more recent thinkers like Freud or even Heidegger.

Both these strategies involve the denigration of Friedrich Engels, who is thus certainly in need of the help Steven Marcus attempts to extend him in his latest foray into 19th-century culture—Marcus having previously written on Dickens and on Victorian pornography. In the updated view of Marx which combines him with psychoanalysis, existentialism, or some other intellectual phenomenon of our times, Engels tends to be seen as the villain who oversystematized and vulgarized the thought of the master whom he survived by twelve years. In the alternate view of Marx which traces him back toward classical thought, Engels tends to be chastised for being tied too closely to 19th-century science; it is conveniently forgotten that when the two men met in 1842 Engels was possibly more under the sway of Hegel than was Marx. Scarcely anybody seems to want to remember the enormous trust Marx placed in Engels during many years of intimate collaboration, and nobody seems to care that it is a book by Engels which has the distinction of being the first complete work in the Marxist canon: *The Condition of the Working Class in England.*

That book provides Marcus with a focus for his own study of 19th-century England. The upgrading of a downgraded Engels may not have been the main intention of Marcus's study, but it is certainly one of its most refreshing effects. The Engels emerging from these pages is an immensely likable and agreeable human being, and one can't help but be grateful to Marcus for rectifying a historical injustice toward a man who selflessly and with good humor did so much to sustain Marx, a thinker he recognized as a man of greater intellectual stature than himself.

But Marcus goes a good deal further, showing a commendable sympathy not only for the man, but for *The Condition of the Working Class in England* as well. He attempts to show that the book is not only an important one but a great one. He has no trouble in proving its importance. Few readers coming to the work either before or after Marcus's interpretation will fail to be impressed by the amazing extent to which an almost full-blown Marxism makes its appearance there (though that may be because Marxism is actually simpler than its more passionates devotees make it out to be).

But not every important book is a great book, and on this score Marcus is somewhat less than fully convincing, though he labors valiantly. *The Condition of the Working Class in England* is open to a great number of criticisms. It paints a distorted picture of the history of England before the Industrial Revolution; its historical predictions have almost invariably turned out to be wrong; its indictment of the English middle classes is far from just—Engels tended to forget that most of the damaging evidence about conditions in Manchester and other places had been collected, in fact, by a middle-class regime with an uneasy conscience.

These and other faults make an especially glaring appearance in the most readily available English version of Engels's book, translated and edited by W. O. Henderson and W. H. Chaloner (Stanford University Press, 1968). Marcus works from the original German version—though he is gracious enough to admit his limitations in this regard and his own translations are at times debatable—but is forced to refer English readers to the edition prepared by Henderson and Chaloner. His indignation at their patent dislike of Engels is surely understandable; every author is entitled to a sympathetic editor. Still, flaws remain flaws even when exposed by hostile sources, and Marcus's own defense of Engels against Henderson

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and Chaloner is itself open to question on a number of points.

Marcus leaves most of the detailed criticism of the "extraordinary deficiencies of both the editors' attitudes and proceedings" to experts like Asa Briggs and E. J. Hobsbawm, reserving for himself a more lofty approach, that of the literary critic expanding the frontiers of his vocation. Upholding the cause of literary criticism even though nobody appears to be attacking it, Marcus wishes to show that it has useful things to contribute toward the understanding not only of, say, poems and novels, but of other kinds of books as well—*The Condition of the Working Class in England*, for example. He therefore sets out to subject that tome to a rather close textual analysis, the results of which are perhaps most fairly described as uncertain. At times, Marcus does produce genuine insights into what Engels was trying to do but at other times he does little more than paraphrase long stretches of Engels's argument. His defense of Engels, if I understand it correctly, turns out to be that *The Condition of the Working Class in England* is after all a work of the literary imagination, and that Engels, far from distorting the history of the Middle Ages and making some very bad guesses about things to come, was engaged in "mythologizing" both the past and the future.

Now, such a defense is open to at least two serious objections. First of all, it assumes that Marcus understands Engels better than Engels understood himself, a very dubious proposition that is inherent in Marcus's general orientation. His criticism, where it is not formalistic tends to be heavily indebted to Freud, as can be seen from the frequent use of words like "unconscious" and "unwitting." But surely one ought first to pay sufficient heed to a writer's explicit intentions and claims. In the case of Engels there can be little doubt that he thought he was writing treatises that deserved to be considered strictly scientific, and in a scientific treatise a factual error is a factual error, not the result of a process of mythologization. One can be almost certain that Engels, never afraid of polemical battles, would have preferred to be attacked by Henderson and Chaloner than to be defended by Marcus in so peculiar a manner.

THE peculiarity and inadequacy of Marcus's analysis and defense of Engels's book also reveal themselves in his simple failure to give the reader an adequate sense of the book he is describing. To begin with, one could not possibly learn from Marcus's account that *The Condition of the Working Class in England* is very heavy going indeed. Tedium, to be sure, is not an excessive price to pay for possible instruction in economic and political realities, but since Engels's book most decidedly does not read like a novel, the reader must be pardoned for mistrusting Marcus's attempt to read it that way. I suspect that even most Marxists are bored by vast stretches of this book, and, further, that much of this boredom is justified. Engels set out to create sympathy for the lot of the proletariat, but he failed adequately to describe the workers, their miseries and yearnings. One wants to know what it *felt* like to be a worker in Manchester in the 19th century. In this respect Engels is of almost no help, and neither is Marcus. He praises Engels for his concreteness but offers very little evidence of it, for the simple reason that such evidence is hard to find in *The Condition of the Working Class in England.*

If one really wishes to understand the plight of the lower classes in 19th-century England, one ought to go not to the Marxists, who certainly have no monopoly on sympathy for the poor, but to great novelists of the era like Dickens. The strange thing is that Marcus knows as much. He continually and sensitively quotes Dickens, and at one point even concedes that a comparison between Dickens and Engels can only be made at the expense of the latter, for "there is only one Dickens." True. Yet instead of pursuing this comparison, which might lead to a *really* impressive justification of literature and of literary criticism, Marcus abandons it in favor of a series of ruminations that make one wonder what exactly he is trying to accomplish, and why.

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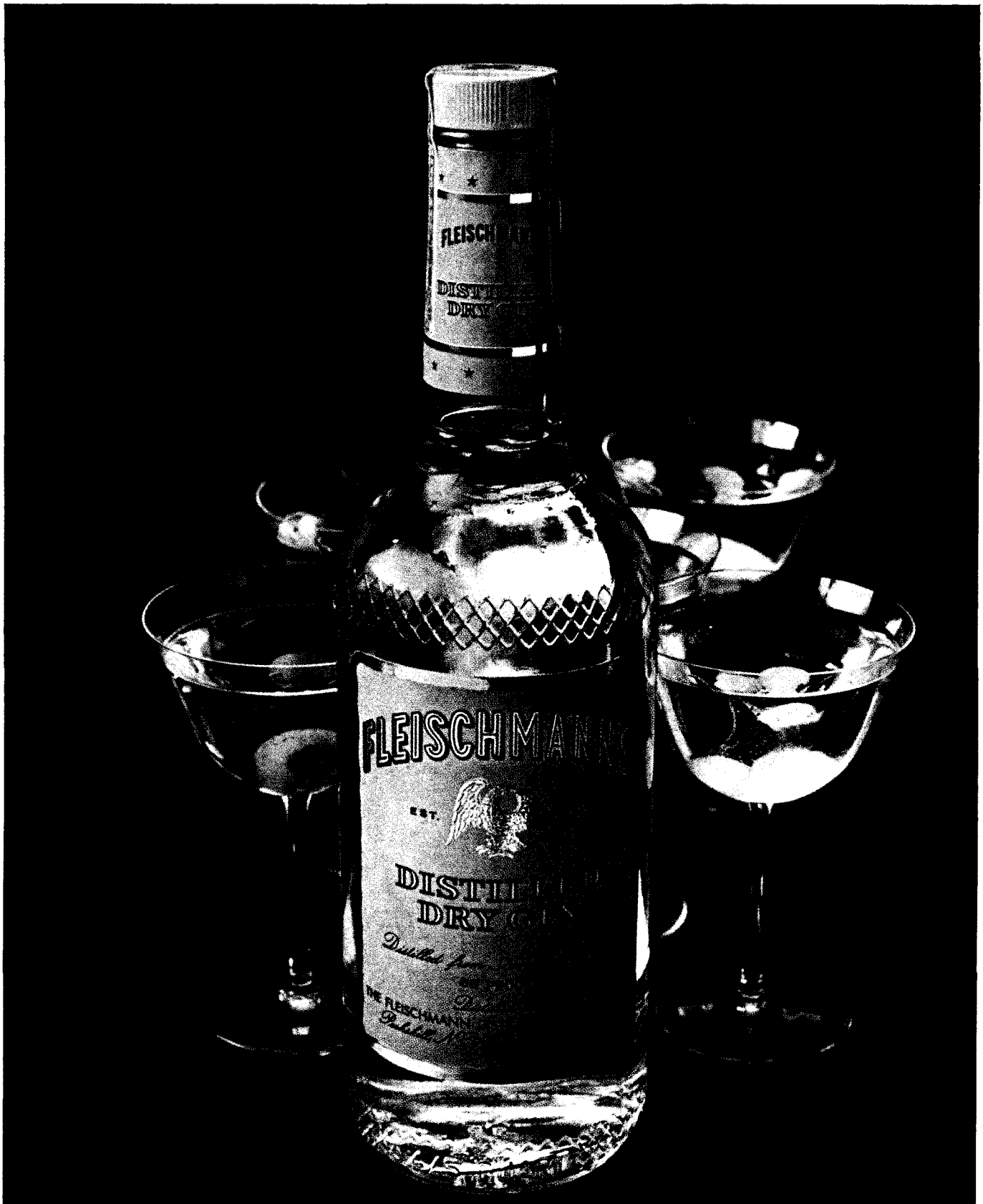

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